

**SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY  
STAVANGER  
NORWAY**

**THE ROLE OF THE DII PEOPLE  
IN THE OUTREACH OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
IN CAMEROON  
1934-1974**

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF MISSION  
AND THEOLOGY AS A COURSE UNIT IN PARTIAL FULFILLEMENT  
FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTERS DEGREE IN THEOLOGY AT  
THE SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY**

**(MOPG 30)**

**BY  
ETIENNE MOMTOTT**

**MAY 2012**

## Declaration

I am declaring to have prepared this work alone. No work like this has been presented by any other person in any university for an award of any degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

Supervisor: Prof. Jørgensen Torstein

Signature.....

Date.....

# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter One .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 TERMINOLOGY .....	1
1.1.1 Mission as Mission Dei .....	2
1.1.2 Mission as Church Planting .....	3
1.1.3 Mission as Evangelization.....	3
1.2 BACKGROUND HISTORY .....	4
1.2.1 Biblical Goal for World Mission .....	4
1.2.2 Westernization of the World Mission .....	5
1.2.3 Outreach of the Mission in Cameroon .....	6
1.2.4 Outcome of the Mission in Adamaoua .....	6
1.3 METHOD .....	8
1.3.1 Literature .....	8
1.3.2 Interviews .....	9
1.3.3 Problematization .....	10
1.3.4 Structure .....	10
<b>Chapter Two .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>THE ENCOUNTER OF THE DII PEOPLE WITH CHRISTIANITY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE DII PEOPLE .....	11
2.1.1 The History of the Origin of the Dii People .....	11
2.1.2 The Culture and Arts of the Dii People .....	13
2.1.3 The Occupation of the Dii People .....	14
2.1.4 The Dii People Belief.....	15
2.2 THE MISSION SHIFT TO THE DII LAND .....	16
2.2.1 The Inconsistency among Muslims.....	16
2.2.2 The Quest for New Mission Field.....	17
2.2.3 The Strategic Foundation.....	18
2.3 THE OVERSEAS MISSIONARIES IN THE DII LAND.....	18
2.3.1 The Initial Contact with the Dii People.....	18
2.3.2 The Impact of the Overseas Missionaries' Work.....	19
2.3.3 The Overview of Missionaries in the Dii Land.....	21
<b>Chapter Three .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>THE EMERGENCE OF THE DII CHRISTIANITY .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 THE GROWTH OF THE DII WORKERS IN MISSION .....	23
3.1.1 The Primary School of Mission.....	23
3.1.2 The Bible School .....	28
3.1.3 The School of Theology.....	30
3.2 THE HOME MISSIONARIES AMONG THE DII PEOPLE.....	32
3.2.1 The Role of Lay People .....	32
3.2.2 The Role of Women .....	35
3.2.3 The Role of the Dii Church Leaders.....	37
3.3 THE REACHING OUT OF THE DII CAMPAIGN .....	39
3.3.1 The Campaign in the Centre of the Dii Land .....	39
3.3.2 The Campaign towards the North of the Dii Land .....	42
3.4 THE CONTROVERSY OF THE DII CHRISTIANITY .....	43

3.4.1	<i>The Identity Crisis of the Dii Christians.....</i>	44
3.4.2	<i>The Spiritual Crisis among the Dii People.....</i>	46
3.4.3	<i>The Crisis of Vocation among the Dii People .....</i>	49
3.4.4	<i>The Campaign towards the South of the Dii Land .....</i>	51
<b>Chapter Four .....</b>		<b>54</b>
<b>THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE DII CHRISTIANITY IN-DEPTH .....</b>		<b>54</b>
4.1	THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DII MINISTRY .....	54
4.1.1	<i>The Dii People as Pillars in Church Mission.....</i>	54
4.1.2	<i>The Dii Church Workers as Partners in Mission .....</i>	56
4.1.3	<i>The Dii Church Workers as Challenger in Mission .....</i>	60
4.2	THE CORE OF THE CONTEMPORARY DII MINISTRY .....	62
4.2.1	<i>The Kinship Challenge .....</i>	62
4.2.2	<i>The Evangelistic Challenge.....</i>	64
4.2.3	<i>The Development Challenge .....</i>	66
<b>Chapter Five .....</b>		<b>69</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>		<b>69</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>		<b>73</b>
APPENDIX A.....		73
APPENDIX B.....		74
APPENDIX C.....		75
APPENDIX D .....		76
<b>APPENDIX E .....</b>		<b>80</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>		<b>81</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been a result of large collaboration with many devoted people. It is with a great gratitude that I want to thank those from whom I have any contributions.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Jørgensen Torstein, who poured out his heart to guide me during this project. I am grateful for constructive correction, comments, suggestions, and encouragement had been truly helpful and highly appreciated.

I want to thank the School of Mission and Theology for supporting my application to the Norwegian government for providing a study opportunity. I am grateful to the staff at School of Mission who made me feels at home during my study and my stay in Norway.

I am indebt to the Dii people and all others informants who hosted me as their beloved son and for their cooperation during my fieldwork. Very special thanks go to those former Norwegian missionaries who have been interviewed and contributed to useful information from their experiences. My deepest respect goes to Finn Ove Kaldhol, John Olav Dankel, Guri Sola and Gerd Tunheim who helped me to identify key informants.

My gratitude is due to the Liberians; and archivists namely Johansen Bjørg Bergøy and Gustave Steensland who had provided appropriate documentation for me. I owe gratitude to the entire lecturer from MHS who had given us good training skills.

I owed a tremendous gratitude to the Dean of Institute of Theology of Meiganga Jean Koulagna who inspired me to expect great things from God; and to Jean Claude Muller, Kåre Lode and Tomas Sundnes Drønen outstanding scholars whose masterpieces path the way for this study.

I am extremely grateful to my parents Paul Barndé and Marie Mama who scarified everything to support my education. A special dept of gratitude is owed to my wife Josephine Taagueum whom God used to minister love and to my daughter Leslie Pandoo Godlove for her encouragement and late Franklin Tayepom.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BEPC	Brevet d'Étude du Premier Cycle
BMS	Baptist Mission Society of London
CEPE	Certificat d'Étude Primaire et Élémentaire
Ed(s)	Editor(s)
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELCC	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon
ELCCRCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon and Republic of Central Africa
ENS	École Normale Supérieure
JBSM	Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MHS	Misjonshøgskolen
NMS	Norwegian Missionary Society
NT	New Testament
SM	Sudan Mission
USA	United State of America

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of the Dii people in the outreach of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon (ELCC) from 1934 to 1974. The contribution of the African people to Church growth in their areas is tremendous in the context of African Church History. Anyway, along the century one of the biggest interests has been given to the history of the church growth and expansion.

Therefore, the historical approach of the church outreach has ever been a very attractive field of study for many scholars. In fact, when one see how big the size of world population is and view the multiplicity of tribes and races it is necessary to narrow our study in one specific case. The case is the encounter of foreign mission and home mission for “the difference between home and foreign missions is not one of principle but of scope.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, the scope of our study is connected to the Dii people missionary enterprise inherited from Norwegian missionaries.

According to the goal of the study the discussion will focus especially on the Dii people of North Cameroon in Central Africa. The trend of this historiography study is a tribute for the indigenous people in general and the Dii people in particular as actor in the history of the local church growth for its outreach. At the same time it is a tribute to the Dii people whose assessment and commitment perform the insights for “home mission.” Likewise a brief analysis of the concept of mission makes sense for the need of the historical approach of the Dii people involvement within the development ELCC.

#### 1.1 Terminology

The concept of mission is a dominant terminology in this study. A brief analysis of the notion will open the door to deal with the Dii people mission enterprise in the history of ELCC. Therefore, to speak of the outreach of the church is tantamount to discuss the development of the church missionary enterprise. And, in that perspective, the notion of mission is the main key word to get a grip of the topic of this work.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the years a great variety of

---

<sup>1</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shift in Theology of mission*, New York: Maryknoll, 1991, 10.

<sup>2</sup> William Keller Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, Second Edition, New York: Oxford University

definitions have been proposed to the concept of mission. So, many of these definitions are used in somewhat different ways since the concept of mission is differently understood by writers. But there are three definitions that fit with the approach of our study. They are also close to the popular understanding among the Dii people when we listening to them. Thus the definition of it relates to the mission of God carried out by the church in her venture of planting and extending through evangelistic field work.

### 1.1.1 *Mission as Mission Dei*

The concept of *mission Dei* is very popular Latin expression. It is defined as the “activity of God” according to his creator Barth in 1932. Oboroji Francis Anekwe stressed that the Protestant churches adopted *mission Dei* theology as a common vision of mission after the Willingen Conference of 1952. He agreed that “mission has its origin in God the father, who sends his Son into the world and in the fact that the father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to the Church to continue in time the salvific mission of the same God to the world.”<sup>3</sup>

The tenets of the concept of mission as *mission Dei* were legend in the history of the church. For Guder the concept of mission can be defined both as *missio Dei* and *missiones ecclesiae*.<sup>4</sup> If the *missio Dei* is related to the mission of God through his Son, Holy Spirit and the church, the *missiones ecclesiae* is the missionary venture of the church for the issue of God’s mission. According to Bosch “the classical doctrine on the mission Dei ... expanded to include yet another movement: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world”<sup>5</sup>

The Dii people were also introduced to the use of the concept of mission by their early contact with the first missionaries. They learned from missionaries the spelling and meaning of the notion of mission. But, for the Dii people the concept of mission is very rich in meaning. That understanding of the mission for indigenous prepared the setting and empowered the vision of the mission. Therefore it seemed to the Dii people that the overseas missionaries carried the burden of God’s Mission. They were looked upon as *nán mísyɔn*<sup>6</sup> in Dii language that means people of mission. The expression is the name given to foreign missionaries, and later on to

---

Press, 2004, 72-73.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Anekwe Oboroji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of a Contemporary Missiology*, New York: Maryknoll, 2006, 134.

<sup>4</sup> Darell L. Guder (ed), *Missional Church*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing co, 1998, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Claude Muller, *Les rites initiatiques des Dii de l’Adamaoua (Cameroun)*, Nanterre : Société d’Ethnologie, 2002, 12.



people who are converted to Christianity. Then those who belong to the church are people of mission or missionaries. Thus, that usage of the term extends the meaning of the mission to church planting.

### *1.1.2 Mission as Church Planting*

Mission as church planting has been the mainline in the history of church. This was known as a main aspect through the practice of missionaries among other peoples. Making a parallel between Catholics and Protestants understanding of the concept of mission Oboroji's claimed that the both agreed on mission as the activities that consisted of establishing the church. The first developed the theory of "church planting" and the second the model of "church growth." He claimed that "the primary goal of mission is to plant the church where it is not yet visibly established, and to nurture it ... accessible to an entire region or people."<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, the concept of mission can be defined as the activities that governed the church. During the first contact of the Dii people with the earlier overseas' missionaries, mission is used to be understood in term what has been done actually as activities. For the Dii people, the word mission includes the mission station, the church, the personnel and all the meetings connected to the churches' activities. The investment is a practical mission that testifies by itself the presence of people of mission. That was the place that the theoretical preaching met the practice. The conjunction of the both transformed the people's view. It convinced people for change and led to faith. That understanding led to the greater and rapid growth of home mission.

### *1.1.3 Mission as Evangelization*

Mission as evangelization in generally means the handing out of mission works to the vast extent both by foreign and national peoples. Coggins T. Wade claimed that "in most areas of the world, these activities are carried on in conjunction with the national church."<sup>8</sup> That seems to apply also to the context of the Dii people. The involvement of the national peoples in the mission work is similar to what is stated in the book of Acts 13, 2-3 in the way that "while they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, 'Set apart for Me

---

<sup>7</sup> Oboroji, *Concept of Mission*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Wade T. Coggins, *So that's what missions is all about: Taking the mystery out of missions for individual and group study*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1975, 19.

Barnabas and Saul, to do the work to which I have called them.’ They fasted and prayed, placed their hands on them, and sent them off.”<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the arrival of the Norwegian missionaries was the starting point for mission enterprise of the Dii people. They are considered as the earliest missionaries at least among the Dii people. Their actions were however supported by some southern engaged national missionaries from southern Cameroon who had been converted to Christianity long time before by other foreign missionaries from different denominations. The missionaries used education and connate opportunities to communicate the message of gospel. Still the conversion of the Dii people to Christianity prepared them at the same time for mission. When the gospel was preached to the Dii people by the former missionaries they were prepared consciously for “home mission.” The Dii people were involved in the mission work instantly. One used to say that the Dii people have contributed efficiently already from the very beginning to spread the Gospel in their area. Their missionary enterprise was not limited only in the Dii motherland but is extended to other people outside the proper area of the Dii.

So, to measure the contribution of the Dii people in the extension of the church a brief outlook on the evolution of the Christian mission in church history and mainly in the Dii area as well is necessary.

## **1.2 Background History**

The background history helps to understand the progress of the evangelization from the beginning up to the Dii people. Three perspectives allow us to see how the process has developed. The biblical, western and African scopes of mission are all important and relevant to take into account.

### *1.2.1 Biblical Goal for World Mission*

The basic motif for mission work comes from the Bible. And those who are Christians can assert loudly that they hold their mission from the word of God in the Bible. Several statements in the New Testament (NT) deal with mission in terms of an obligation put on Christian to spread the Gospel to the world. In this context we will confine ourselves to quote the main NT words of Jesus on this issue as stated in Mathew 28, 18-19. Thus, at that time Jesus appears to his disciples “... and said to them, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven

---

<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's English version*, New York: American Bible Society, 1991, 868.

and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age’.”<sup>10</sup> The discourse of Jesus lives the room to the mission in early church and to the outreach of the church around the world.

### 1.2.2 Westernization of the World Mission

Historically, as the evangelical revival occurred in Europe and United State of America, in 19<sup>th</sup> century so many Missionary Societies were found in order to evangelize and civilize peoples in African countries and the rest of the non-western world. Of course, Western evangelists have not escaped the biblical recommendation. According to certain sources the missionary enterprise towards of Africa was motivated by a diversity of purposes such that some scholars are speaking of “the desirability of promoting Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization.”<sup>11</sup> In this way the original idea of world mission settlement has been partly betrayed in this purpose by the commerce, civilization and Christianization ventures. Also, the launching of an international mission enterprise took place in a context of imperialism and colonialism. So many missionary associations joined the mission work almost based on the colonial principle of settlement “*regio ejus religios.*”<sup>12</sup> That principle owed the rights of religious activities to the members of the established colonial administration. As the international relationship increased between the western world and the rest of the world Christianity also emerged throughout the world. Of particular importance to note that:

(...) the decades of the 1820’s, 1830’s and 1840’s were marked by a new development of openness which also implied a new element of increased social breadth in the contact between Norway and foreign countries. In this way channels for impulses from abroad were opened in different fields. Above all, this applied to the Norwegian connections with the nearby countries of Britain, Holland, Germany, France and the Baltic countries – in addition to Denmark and Sweden.<sup>13</sup> (Jørgensen 1990, 85)

As Torstein Jørgensen points out when it comes to Cameroon the flow of missionaries was more or less respectful of the same rule to avoid clashes between the colonial administration

---

<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Bible*, 774.

<sup>11</sup> James S. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (eds), « Faith and Culture in Perspective » in *New Direction in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*, New York: Maryknoll, 1999, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Aggée Célestin Lomo Myaziom. *Sociétés et ritualités religieuses au Cameroun sous domination Française (1916-1958)*, Paris : L’Harmattan, 2001, 112.

<sup>13</sup> Torstein Jørgensen, *Contact and Conflict: Norwegian Missionaries, the Zulu Kingdom, and the Gospel 1850-1873*, Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1990, 85.

and mission.

### 1.2.3 *Outreach of the Mission in Cameroon*

The development of the missionary work in Cameroon began in the southern part of the country. It was exerted by different mission association from different background and countries. These mission associations settled in accordance of some historical movement as we mentioned above. The western pioneers to start mission work were the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society (JBMS) in 1841 in the south of the country. Thus for the outcome of the ministry the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society willingly cooperated with the Baptist Mission Society of London (BMS).<sup>14</sup> In 1886 the Baptist missionaries were evicted by the Germans who settled Douala in 14 July 1884 and replaced by Basel missionaries. But, during the First World War, the German missionaries were kicked out by the French and British missionaries in 1914. Those tensions of the war at the international level cause serious repercussions on the missionary field in different areas of the world. As Kåre Lode claimed in his book entitled *Appelés à la liberté: Histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*; the activity of the missionary societies was weakened by the World War.<sup>15</sup> This also applies to the outreach of the church among peoples of Adamaoua region of Cameroon where the mission work took place in between of the two world wars.

### 1.2.4 *Outcome of the Mission in Adamaoua*

The arrival of the first mission societies in the *Adamaoua*<sup>16</sup> Region of Cameroon is connected to this situation. Also it caused different kind of troubles for the progress of the mission work. The pioneer missionaries in the Adamaoua Region were from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the so-called Sudan Mission (SM). They arrived in Adamaoua region in 1923. The second group came from the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS). They reached the area in 1925 and started work among the Mbum ethnic group and the Dii people. So the missionaries of the SM directed their mission toward Mboula a village of the Gbaya ethnic group village toward the east of Ngaoundéré. Then, the NMS missionaries based their work in Ngaoundéré among Mbum people and afterwards among the Dii people. One should note that Ngaoundéré was already main city of the Adamaoua Region in Cameroon at that time. Although the SM missionaries were from United of America and the NMS missionaries

---

<sup>14</sup> Jean Paul Messina and Jaap Van Slageren, *Histoire du Christianisme au Cameroun : Des origines à nos jours*, Yaoundé : Editions Clé, 2005, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté : Histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*, Amstelveen : Imrocep éditions, 1990. 104.

<sup>16</sup> Adamaoua derives from the name of the Prince Adama its founder who is the son of Lamido Hasana Bâ.

from Norway, the both have the Lutheran background.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the SM and NMS missionaries worked side by side for a while. In 1960 they decided to found the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon that has been characterized by some scholars as “the result of the often complicated collaboration.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the year 1960 became the starting point of a long pilgrim mission for the twin mission societies. The long journey towards independence of the national church was also assisted by the help of some national allies. For this reason one has in later time to paid more attention to their contribution in the venture of local missionary enterprise. The role of local people in the outreach of the church in the case of the ELCC is in some extent discussed by few scholars. But the general picture is that it has been underestimated. In Cameroon it is clear that many tribes were involved in the process of the establishment of the ELCC. Along the history there are Dii people, Mbum, Samba, Doyaayo, Laka, Karang, Pana, Ngambay, Moudang, Fulani, Gbaya, Bafek, Tikar, Mambila, Mbabouté, Vouté, Kwandja, Bulu, Kaka, Mbodomo and Bamiléké people who are part of this enterprise.

In my thesis here I will confine myself to the work neither of the two missionary associations that founded the ELCC. My study will look deeper into the close relationship between the NMS and the Dii people, and not on the many national other tribes that have been part of the outreach enterprise of the ELCC. Despite the participation of people from several tribes, the role of Dii people in the outreach of ELCC from 1934 to 1974 is substantial. When it comes to the establishment of the ELCC it seems that the Dii people have contributed in the different ways in the history as home missionaries. The participation of the Dii people can be regarded as one of legend contribution to the “home mission” in the history of ELCC. There is a need to look more into this field in order to find out the historical facts and save the memory of these precursors of the Christian faith among the Dii people. Beyond that, it will allow us to see how influential the missionary enterprise of the Dii people for the outreach of the ELCC was. The elaboration of this relationship has generated what we call an agent of mission among the Dii people. By defining the Dii people as an agent of mission, our work will put more emphasis on the role that the Dii people played on behalf of the Lutheran Church. Thus, a main perspective of my study is a historiographical one by putting a balancing focus on the active participation of the Dii people in the home mission in the Northern part of Cameroon in Central Africa. In that perspective the Dii Christianity venture will by analyzed both in regards to the historical background and the actual working involvement into the history of

---

<sup>17</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 112.

<sup>18</sup> Sundnes Tomas Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon: The Dii People and Norwegian Missionaries, 1934-1960*, Boston: Brill, 2009, 5.

the ELCC.

### 1.3 Method

In order to deal with this study we have to manage with both written and oral sources. The motivation from the world mission towards of African people collected from the work of scholars and the contextual information collected from our own fieldwork will form the two scopes of this research. Thus, to reach the goal of this study we will draw upon the relevant written works of some scholars and reflect and analyze the testimony of selected individual whom we interviewed and quoted as informants. But, one has to mention that there are very few written sources on the particular topic of the contribution of local Dii actors in the outreach of the church.

#### 1.3.1 Literature

One study that deserved our attention is the book of Tomas Drønen entitled *Communication and Conversion: The Dii people and Norwegian missionaries, 1934-1960*. Focusing on the Dii people in connection with the work of the first generation of missionaries, this book is using multidisciplinary approaches on the socio-cultural change of the Dii people. Still the author is aware that the outreach of the ELCC is partly indebted to effort of the Dii people themselves. Drønen grants them the status of “pillars”<sup>19</sup> in the establishment of the ELCC. He claims that “the Dii people are presented as one of the pillars of the Norwegian contribution to a future Lutheran Church.”<sup>20</sup> However, the starting point of this story is located at the arrival of Norwegian missionary among the Dii people.

Another source, and not the less, is the book of Kåre Lode entitled *Appelés à la Liberté: Histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*. The author delivers information concerning the path of some major national agents of mission or local missionaries. In this book one can find the names of the men and women that took part to the planting and extension of the Church. In short, most of the great and historical figures at the very beginning of ELCC are introduced.

We have also made use of the book of Erik Larsen entitled *Kamerun: Norsk Misjon Gjennom 50 År*.<sup>21</sup> This book, written 1973, is one of the primary sources to enrich and deepen our

---

<sup>19</sup> Sundnes Tomas Drønen, *Communication Conversion et Conversation : Les Dii et les Missionnaires Norvégiens ; Adamaoua 1934- 1960*, Cameroun : Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga, 2008, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Erik Larsen, *Kamerun: Norsk Misjon Gjennom 50 År*, Stavanger: Nomi Forlag, 1973.

understanding not only of the Dii people but of all those ethnic groups involved in the early ELCC. The author has given some details upon the early Dii home mission that is very useful.

The book of Bengt Sundkler, entitled *A History of the Church in Africa*,<sup>22</sup> gave us general knowledge on the development of Christianity in the entire African continent. This book highlighted also some important aspects on the growth of Christianity in Cameroon. It was a relevant material for our study.

Beside these authors some monographs can throw some general light upon the topic. Unfortunately most of the missionaries' reports delivered to the home office mention little information on local agents participating in church planting. In addition most information concerning the missionaries is published in some foreign language such as Norwegian.

### *1.3.2 Interviews*

In addition to the information and perspective provided by the mentioned written sources a study like ours has to build upon a field research of interview with selected individuals as well. Our study in Norway from August 2010 to 2012 shaped the choice of our topic and its general guideline was performed during our stay in Cameroon from June to August 2011. We constructed our study based on two different fieldworks both in Norway and in Cameroon. This work is the result of these interviews collecting for some former Norwegian missionaries, the Dii church workers from different background and also some national observers. For an in-depth interview our survey was directed towards eight informants so three from Norway with former missionaries who had been working in the Dii land. For the same goal five informants were selected in Cameroon according to the connection they have with the history of the establishment of the ELCC. These findings we suppose relevant build the consistency of this work rely too much on these interviews.

These interviews enable us to look backward through several years into aspect of a historical process which is without written evidence. By analyzing our findings from interview we can hopefully draw a sustainable picture of the Dii people and their role in the outreach of ELCC. A main gain of such a study will also be the saving of the memory of local people who have been at work for the promotion of the gospel in the Dii land. These people implemented decisive efforts for the home mission as a contribution to the world of church mission. We

---

<sup>22</sup> Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Stead, *The history of Church in Africa*, United Kingdom: Cambridge, University Press, 2000.

hope that this work will complement the picture drawn by early work scholars and it can also be considered as a feedback from indigenous religion in the development of Christianity.

### *1.3.3 Problematization*

To overcome our topic the main question of the study is why did some scholars grant to the Dii people the status of pioneer in the development of the ELCC? In order, to guide our analysis we elaborated a set of relevant questions addressed to the informants we have interviewed. There were: Who are the Dii people? How did the Dii people become Christian? What did the Dii people have done for the outreach of the church? Did they succeed in that work? What could they be proud of today? Is it possible to make use of their methods and strategies today? It is our aim that the results of our interrogation might show how the Dii people became one of the principal agents of local mission in the outreach of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon. The connection with other ethnic groups will be interesting for the enlightenment of some points but not our main focus. The path of the Dii people is the centre in our analysis.

### *1.3.4 Structure*

To make out that the Dii people were not only the main partner of Norwegian missionaries but full agent in the field of mission some relevant points shall be elaborated.

Firstly we will look on the background history of the Dii landscape as a field of mission as described above.

Secondly, the Dii people opening up for the Christian mission from 1934 should be taken into account, as well as the more general look at foreign agent that shaped the mission venture. Likewise through the presentation of the encounter of the Dii people with Christianity we can find out the setting of the local missionary enterprise.

Thirdly, the involvement of local missionaries in the path of the mission field from 1937 will be explored. Under this point we will analyze how and to what extent, the practice of local missionaries was relevant for the progress of the church.

Fourthly, the impact of the local mission enterprise will be evaluated. The efforts of the Dii people in the mission will be the overarching perspective in the approach we dedicated to this work.



## Chapter Two

### THE ENCOUNTER OF THE DII PEOPLE WITH CHRISTIANITY

It is necessary to describe briefly the Dii landscape and discuss how the Dii people opened up to Christianity. In the same perspective we will see also how the first missionary association took part to the church planting among the Dii tribe.

#### 2.1 The historical setting of the Dii people

For this study has to be directed to the far history of the Dii people. An understanding of the Dii people origin and earliest movements will precede the study of culture, art and belief system of the inhabitants of the Dii land.

##### 2.1.1 *The History of the Origin of the Dii People*

The genesis of the name of the Dii people is controversial. Different words transcribe the name of the Dii people and each of them has a special connotation. The Fulani called them Douri - referring to someone who has been in a place for a long time - for two reasons. First, because the Dii people were the ancient people found on the Dii land as they arrived. Second, because the Fulani “colonized” the Dii people. Based on this Fulani word and according to their linguistic conveniences the German colonial administration called them Duru and the French colonial administration named them Dourou.<sup>23</sup> But the Dii people named themselves Dii and disapproved all other names given by other peoples considered as pejorative. The origin of the Dii people is complex according to the development of their history. These differences reflect the discourse of the Dii people and on some scholars’ description of the history of origin of the Dii people. The oral tradition of the Dii themselves has kept alive this memory of the origin and is discussed by scholars.

Two traditions explain the early history of the Dii people. They are the tradition of Baguirni and the tradition of *Mgbang Sii*. The tradition of Baguirni state that the Dii people had their origin in Baguirni before they moved to the North of the Bénoué. This tradition is supported by Gunther Tessman quoted by Jean Koulagna who say that the “Dii group is one of the Baguirnian ... clans that came from the Massenya during the fifteenth century and later on,

---

<sup>23</sup> Paul Maïna, *Les rites d’initiations dans la société Africaine: la politique de circoncision chez les Dii du Nord Cameroun*, Yaoundé : Mémoire de psychologie Université de Yaoundé I, 1988, 5.

they settled in the North of the Benoue [sic] river ...”<sup>24</sup> Based on the Dii people discourse Drønen claimed that the origin of the Dii people could be the mountain of *Mgbang Sii* in the North-East of Cameroon.<sup>25</sup> This location is close to Eldridge speaking of the Dii people in connection with the Mbum people. He locates this origin of the Dii people on the mount Ndjakraw near the river Bénoué.<sup>26</sup> On another hand Muller situated this origin of the Dii regarding their migration across the Eastern mountainous of Poli to the escarpments of Ngaoundéré.

The relation point between the two traditions converged to the mount *Mgbang Sii* known as mount Gampéré heighten about 1597m located near Tcholliré. The mountain of *Mgbang Sii* was a fortress for the Dii people to face their oppressors until Lamido Bouba Djidda of Rey defeated them in 1878. After that attack the Dii people were scattered in the Dii land where they established themselves in small villages. There they remained under the pressure of three Fulani lords namely the Lamibbe<sup>27</sup> of Yola, Ngaoundéré and Rey Bouba.<sup>28</sup> For Muller this period of time was simply a “colonialism” of the Dii people by the Fulani. This “colonialism” continued under the umbrella of the German and French along side the British colonial administration until the arrival Norwegian missionaries.

The Dii land is located between the Adamaoua Region and the North Region of Cameroon in Central Africa. More precisely the Dii people lived in the Vina division sized in the Adamaoua Region and the Mayo-Rey division, a land of altogether c.54 000 km<sup>2</sup>. These two divisions contain numerous of small Dii villages located along the national roads. Muller distinguishes this location within two major lines. The location does not correspond with the divisional borders. But it gives a simple understanding of the geographic picture. The first line goes from Ngaoundéré to Garoua via Bouki and the second from Ngaoundéré to Tcholliré via Nganha. One calls this part of the country the Dii land. According to Muller the number of the inhabitants inside the Dii land was about 40, 000 and 50,000 people in 2002.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Jean Koulagna, *Unicité et ethnicité dans l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun (EELC) enjeux ecclésiologiques : le cas de la région centre*, Cameroun : Master Thesis, Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé, 1999, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Eldridge Mohammadou. *Les Royaumes Foulbés du Plateau de l'Adamaoua au XIX Siècle, Vol. IV*. Japan: ILCAA, 1978, 257.

<sup>27</sup> Lamibbe is the plural form of Lamido, the name of the Fulani king.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Claude Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua (Nord-Cameroun)*, Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2006, 134-135.

<sup>29</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua*, 17-20.

The encounter of the Dii people with the Fulani, the German and French colonial administration has an impact on their history and geographic settlement. From this the Dii people experienced different cultures, but the impulse did not eradicate their social and cultural identity.

### 2.1.2 *The Culture and Arts of the Dii People*

The Dii people have diverse arts and cultural expression. But they put special emphasis on some arts and rites as symbols of their cultural identity. The Dii people had an old acquaintance with the art of iron. This task concerned particularly the Dii blacksmiths or *nay Dii*. According to Muller there are many controversies on the origin of the blacksmith among the Dii people.<sup>30</sup> The knowledge of the work of iron allowed the Dii people to make tools for their agro-pastoral activities. They made also weapons for hunting and protection. This familiarity with iron certainly empowered the Dii people's resistance against the Fulani oppression. In the same way it was helpful for their hunting and own capture of slaves among the other tribes as Laka and Gbaya people.<sup>31</sup>

Beside this art of iron the most important element of their culture is the rite of circumcision. One distinguishes between two different types of circumcision; the male circumcision and female circumcision. The male circumcision is more valuable than female circumcision in the life of the Dii people. The female circumcision prepares young girls for adulthood. It is connected to the male circumcision. During this ritual they received the advice upon the sexual behaviour. Muller called it "pseudo-excision"<sup>32</sup> because it not an excision at all. In fact the female circumcision is not obligatory but the male circumcision is a required rite of passage for all young boys.

There are two categories of male circumcision. There is an ordinary and a special circumcision. The ordinary circumcision is used for the initiation of all the boys. The special circumcision is reserved only to a new chief during his enthronization. The circumcision has an important social impact in the life of the family and for the circumcised. In a social perspective circumcision allows the family to meet, have fun and rejoice together. The circumcision ceremony is a period to make fun with people. It is also the time for the family to show their wealth. On the other hand through the circumcision the young boys become *dòn*

---

<sup>30</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua*, 31-33.

<sup>31</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua*, 136.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Claude Muller, *Les rites initiatiques des Diï de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun)*, Nanterre :Société d'Ethnologie, 2002, 107.

or circumcised. They pass from childhood to adulthood. The boy becomes a man. The circumcision is a school of life, courage and bravery for the young Dii boys. In addition to circumcision for young boys there is according to Muller a circumcision of enthronement for the new chiefs of the village. The new chief of the village should be circumcised twice. The first time he did it when he was young and the second time while he is appointed as a new leader of the village. The new chief becomes “a true man” or *wayèe àgà* through this special circumcision of enthronement so-called *dōnné gbaŋ dōli*. Likewise he receives the virtues of the sovereignty characterized by the peacefulness or *ká 'ad*.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these features of the culture the Dii people give also value to their mother tongue, the *Yag Dii*. The Dii people speak the *Yag Dii* that has many dialects.<sup>34</sup> The work on creating a written of the *Yag Dii* started around 1949. The pioneer of this work was the venerable Thomas Maïdawa. Lode asserted that during his ministry on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1949 he had a vision that the Dii people would preach the gospel in *Yag Dii*. This dream nurtured his main motivation to start the work for the development of his mother tongue. Unfortunately his vision was not sufficiently supported at the beginning. A continuation of this the work that started in 1960 was suddenly stopped in 1978 because of tensions between the translators.<sup>35</sup> A new spring of the alphabetization of the *Yag Dii* was the result of the teamwork of Thomas Maïdawa, Lars Lode, Lee Bonhoff and Mathieu Kadia. So there is very limited collection of literature in the *Yag Dii*. One can have the Catechism, the New Testament, and the Psalm, the collection of diphthongs, myths and Bible stories.

In fact if the Dii language appeared as a main uniting element of identity of the Dii people their occupation is not less so.

### 2.1.3 *The Occupation of the Dii People*

The Dii people have various activities of labour and sustenance. They are practise agro-pastoral work and different other activities in their everyday life. The Dii people are farmers. They grow yams and traditionally some sort of millet with grains *sad*<sup>36</sup> which are very small. These cereals have now disappeared and have been replaced by other products like maize, cassava, potatoes and vegetables. These new crops were provided to the Dii people by their neighbours the Mbum and Gbaya peoples according to Muller. Still the Dii people are famous

<sup>33</sup> Muller, *Les rites initiatiques des Dii de l'Adamaoua*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dîi de l'Adamaoua*, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 212 - 214.

<sup>36</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 30.

yams growers in Cameroon. Yams for the Dii people are a so-called *ore Blanc* that means white gold, and provided to the Dii people a valuable income for their economical growth.

Furthermore the Dii people have been historically owners of cows of small size. During their life time on the Eastern mountainous of Poli those cows were prosperous. That activity reinforced the understanding of the history of their migration along the mountains. Their migration from the mountain and their establishment in the plain brought an end to these activities. These cows died out because of climate change and from disease.<sup>37</sup>

Beside these agro-pastoral activities the Dii people as a result of contact with Western people they get education at school. The education gave those opportunities to obtain work as catechists, teachers and pastors and different kind of jobs in the public administration of the State.

The contact with other peoples such as the Fulani on one hand and the missionaries on the other had an impact not only on their everyday life, but influenced also their beliefs and cult.

#### 2.1.4 *The Dii People Belief*

The Dii people have their own belief system. To understand the Dii belief system it is relevant to refer to the concept of African traditional religion. Regarding the African traditional religion Edowu E. Boladji asserts that "... the African traditional religion can not be described as polytheistic. Its appropriate description is monotheistic ..." <sup>38</sup> dominate idea of one Supreme God. This claim seems to apply also to the case of the Dii people.

The Dii people are familiar to the gods or spirits of their ancestors. These small gods or spirits of the ancestors named *Tayii waa-vo* or *yoob*<sup>39</sup> are believed to emanate from *Tayii* who is the Supreme God. The idea behind the cult of these smaller deities relates to the Supreme God, i.e. the Dii people worship the Supreme God through these small gods. One practises the cult to the deities in the context of family ceremonies and in the context of public ceremonies. The public events that require a public cult is related to different seasons of the year on one hand and to the traditional celebration on the other. Regarding the season of the year sowing and harvest ceremonies it is important to protect people from the curse of the spirits of the ancestors. Traditional celebration of marriage, circumcision, birth and death rites requires the

---

<sup>37</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua*, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Idowu, E. Boladji. *African Traditional Religion : A definition*, London: SCM Press, 1973, 168.

<sup>39</sup> Muller, *Les rites initiatiques des Diï de l'Adamaoua*, 22-23.

special veneration of the spirits of ancestors also to prevent curse. Beside the traditional religion the Dii people are strongly influenced by the religions of Islam and Christianity. Christianity is the most influential and dominant religion among the Dii people today. The Dii Christian people use to make a parallel between these spirits and the Spirit of Jesus Christ in this term “I think we the Dii people we don’t know Jesus Christ, we can compare him to our ancestors or elders through whom we use to reach Tayii.”<sup>40</sup>

This understanding of the Dii people could explain the way that the Dii land became a fruitful field of mission for overseas missionary.

## **2.2 The mission Shift to the Dii land**

The outreach of Christianity to the Dii people was different compared to the other peoples of Northern Cameroon. This enterprise obeyed to the Great Commission that consisted to bring the “Good News” to those who have not yet received it. The situation of the Dii people in 1933 fitted with that perspective beside the inconsistency and strategic foundation.

### *2.2.1 The Inconsistency among Muslims*

When the Norwegian missionaries arrived in Cameroon by settling in the Adamaoua Region they in the first instance chose to work among the Mbum people in Ngaoundéré.

While the mission work achieved some success among animist people the same was not easy among Muslims. Christian missionaries had successfully converted Gbaya and others people in the south of the country but a similar result was difficult to obtain among the Mbum people of Ngaoundéré. The Mbum people were not so easy to handle and the missionaries did not harvest much of success among them in term of conversion. In fact Islam has gained ground among the Mbum people several years before the Norwegian missionaries arrived with the gospel. Islamization of the Mbum people started already in 1806 with the conquest of Othman Dan Fodio,<sup>41</sup> founder of the Sokoto Empire also called the Sudan Empire which also included the Northern Cameroon from Adamaoua and northwards. The same year Othman appointed Adama as the *Lamido Fombina*. The *Lamido Fombina* is the Fulani attribution that means the sovereign of South which is the territory of Adamaoua. Likewise the Lamido is the attribution that designates a military-political and religious leader. This attribution will be use throughout this presentation. So back to the responsibility of Lamido Fombina itself, Eldridge describes

---

<sup>40</sup> Gadji. *The Understanding of the divine among the Dii Tribe, and its Implications for their Christian Faith*, Stavanger: Master Thesis, School of mission and theology, 2007, 24.

<sup>41</sup> Engelbert Mveng and Beling-Nkoumba. *Histoire du Cameroun*, Yaoundé : CEPMAE, 1974, 121-123.

how Othman proceeded to organise the outreach of Islam mission to Adamaoua.<sup>42</sup>

In 1923 and in 1925, when the missionaries of Sudan Mission (SM) and NMS arrived in the Adamaoua region the Mbum people was more Muslim than animist as compared to the Dii people. The missionaries therefore decided to change the focus toward the Dii people, but did not give up their project among Mbum people.

### 2.2.2 *The Quest for New Mission Field*

The change of the missionary's attention toward the Dii people opened up for a new development. The Dii people had not yet been evangelized by any other overseas missionaries and the Dii land lay in front of them as something like a virgin land for the outreach of the gospel. In 1933 the Norwegian missionary Johannes Thrana visited the Dii land. When he arrived in the Dii land he felt welcome by the Dii people. His main impression was that the Dii people were open to Christianity. He decided to start work among them. Thus through him the NMS started its cooperation with the Dii people.

But the discovery of the Dii land and its people should entail for missionaries a new challenge in addition to that of preaching the Gospel to them. One aspect was involvement in struggle against oppression of the Dii people. The missionaries found also that the Dii people were needy people in many respects. The Dii people were oppressed by the Fulani Lamido who had levied heavy taxes on them. These taxes from the Dii people were collected regularly. They also hired workers among the Dii people for forced work in their compound. This was the practice of the Fulani Lamibbe in the Northern Cameroon not only towards the Dii people but also towards the other non-Fulani people. Daniel Abwa who studies the relationship between Fulani Lamido and the colonial French administration states that the Lamido "appeared to the French as indispensable intermediary ...To allow him to give the best performance, the French government had to avoid anything which might affect his authority."<sup>43</sup> The overseas missionaries noted these tensions between the Dii people and the Fulani. Thus to free the Dii people from this oppression was one of the main challenges for the missionaries besides evangelization.

In that perspective the NMS missionaries found an issue for a new venture among the Dii people.

---

<sup>42</sup> Mohammadou, *Les Royaumes Foulbés du Plateau de l'Adamaoua au XIX Siècle*, 229-232.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Abwa, "The French administrative system in the lamidate of Ngaoundéré, 1915-1945" in *Introduction to the history of Cameroon in Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries*, ed. Martin Z. Njeuma, 1989, 142.

### 2.2.3 *The Strategic Foundation*

Another aspect that motivated the missionaries to start the work among the Dii people was that of strategy. The Dii land seemed to be a neutral area. The Dii people are located between the three Fulani chiefdom of Rey in the North Region, Ngaoundéré in the Adamaoua Region and Yola beyond the West. Added to this the Dii people were bordering to the Mbum people. And both the Mbum and Dii people shared the life within the destiny of the three chiefdoms of Rey, Ngaoundéré and Yola. Likewise the missionaries wanted also to keep up their contact with the Mbum people in order to continue evangelization also among them.

Of great importance was also their aim that by their establishment in the Dii land the missionaries wanted to block the fast spread of Islam from the North to the South. The Dii land seemed to be a suitable area to base this strategic plan for their mission work. Lode asserts that this has been a main goal of the SM and NMS mission societies in Cameroon.<sup>44</sup> He adds that the missionaries wanted to reach the chiefdom of Rey to fight against slavery which was very common in that area. Lode states that between the years 1930 and 1940 the Fulani lamido used to collect their slaves among the Dii people or in the East among the Gbaya and Sango peoples. He completed this claim when he said that the right for the Fulani Lamido to take slaves was reinforced by the French colonial system.<sup>45</sup> Daniel Abwa claims that “as a political leader ... the lamido seemed a valid spokesman, and obvious auxiliary for French.”<sup>46</sup> They regarded the Dii territory as somehow virgin land for their work and also looked for partners in this new mission field to complete their goal.

The change of the scope of NMS from the Mbum to the Dii people introduced the era of overseas pioneers for the development of the Christianity in the Dii land.

## 2.3 **The overseas missionaries in the Dii land**

For deeper understanding of the origin and history of church among the Dii people it is necessary to focus also on its mentors. Initially Christianity in the Dii land was founded by overseas missionaries. The relation between overseas missionaries and the Dii people laid the ground for a sustainable network for the mission work in the Dii land in the following years.

### 2.3.1 *The Initial Contact with the Dii People*

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1933 Thrana made a trip to the Dii plain with the two Cameroonians

---

<sup>44</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 121.

<sup>45</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 116-117.

<sup>46</sup> Abwa, “The French administrative system in the lamidate of Ngaoundéré, 1915-1945”, 138.



companions Pierre Ndjemba and Paul Gonom.<sup>47</sup> They settled in Mbé as pioneers in the Dii area. As soon as they arrived, Thrana met the Lamido Kumba who ruled Mbé from 1915 to 1976.<sup>48</sup> They held a meeting with the Lamido and his people. Thrana then applied to start mission work on his land. We do not know the exact content of Thrana's message, but somehow he managed to achieve a positive response from the Lamido.

The reaction of the Lamido of Mbé was very relevant. As a response he made a short speech to around hundred people gathered at his court. Erik Larsen mentions that the Lamido said to the population that they should welcome these people who wanted to preach the word of God to them. And they should build a house for God in the city.<sup>49</sup> The Lamido was himself open to Christianity. Still he was never baptized. He promised to the catechist that he would like to be baptised before he died. Although, he was not openly converted to Christianity he allowed Christianity to establish itself in the Dii land. But the members of his court did not agree on his flexibility to Christianity. They wanted him to pay more attention to the traditional religion than to the Christianity. This internal tension between the Lamido and his followers at the court was not a real obstacle for the growth of the missionary enterprise. On the contrary Christianity came to spread rapidly in the Dii area

### 2.3.2 *The Impact of the Overseas Missionaries' Work*

By the arrival of Johannes Thrana in the Dii plain became one of the mission fields of the NMS missionaries. And the overseas missionaries' work should come to exert important influences on the life of the Dii people. One can divide the impact of this work into the social, cultural and religious fields.

In the socio-cultural field the missionaries figured out some strategies for the mission. A main element in this plan was education of young people. In fact the school project was their first concern. Also the evangelization was to begin at school. One spoke of the mission school as "a bible school" compared to the state school. To follow up the project most of the inhabitants were involved directly or indirectly. The missionaries chose to put emphasis on education since they knew that young people constitute the future of society. They used Mbum language for communication even to teach at school and to preach the gospel instead of the Yag Dii. They taught them Mbum language according to their goal towards the Mbum people. Lode notes that they voted for Mbum language in 1936 because most of the Dii people had a firm

---

<sup>47</sup> Larsen, *Kamerun*, 40.

<sup>48</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua*, 136.

<sup>49</sup> Larsen, *Kamerun*, 40.

relationship with the Mbum people.<sup>50</sup> The missionaries' strategy on this point coincides well with Eldridge's observation of intermarriage between the Dii people and Mbum people. They were the neighbours of the Dii people. Likewise the early missionaries aimed at reaching the Mbum people by using their language.

Thus the Dii people had to learn Mbum language at school and for worship in church. The Mbum language became the language for the mission and the church. The school was a kind of bible school. The missionaries taught more bible lesson than the other discipline. The young boys and girls went to school with zeal to learn foreign language of course but they were full of Bible Knowledge. This prepared the pupils for evangelization but not so much for public administrative service jobs. In the long run a large number of the first local workers in the mission, beside the overseas' missionaries, were recruited among the Dii people.<sup>51</sup> Later on when the school system was changed, some former students abandoned the mission work. The majority of the primary workers in the public service of the state were the products of the missionaries' schools.

In a socio-political perspective a main effort of the missionaries was the struggle against a double colonialism that the Dii people suffered. They were victims of the colonialism of the Fulani Lamido under the umbrella of the French colonial office. In 1937 the implication of the missionaries was much appropriated at different levels for the case of the Dii people. The missionaries faced the Fulani Lamido pressure and the controversies of the colonial administration. By the indifference of the colonial administration the Dii people and the other peoples suffered from the oppression of the Fulani people. The colonial administration was very complaisant with the situation of the Fulani superiority on others people. Some important personalities of the French colonial office took part to these controversies. There were Delacroix *chef de subdivision*, Mr. Jaubert and Notary both *chefs de région* appointed by the French colonial administration. Broadly speaking, Delacroix was not against emancipation of the Dii people and Mr. Notary who took the post of Mr. Jaubert supported also the missionary's enterprise among the Dii people. In fact Mr. Jaubert was encompassed into the policy of the Lamido of Ngaoundéré who was against the development of the Dii Land and he was also opposed to the erection of the Dii plain as canton. Since he was *chef de region* he used his position to close some schools and blocked the missionary's activities in accordance

---

<sup>50</sup> Kâre Lode. "L'apport culturel de la Mission Norvégienne en Adamaoua" in *Peuples et Cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun)*, Paris : Editions de l'ORSOM, 1993, 252.

<sup>51</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 104.

to the will of the Lamido. He was considered by one of his French colleague as the “boy du Lamido” of Ngaoundéré because he was very obedient to him. The tenacity of the missionaries however, finally contributed to free the Dii people. The following Dii phrase “merci à vous, les blancs, de nous avoir libérés!” which is also the title of an article expressed the acknowledgement of the Dii people towards anti-colonists overseas missionaries.<sup>52</sup> In short some of the French colonists and particularly the Norwegian missionaries freed the Dii people from “colonialism” of the Fulani Lamido, their suppressors.

As a result the socio-cultural and religious change and development were in a decisive way influenced by the policy of their Western missionary mentor.

### 2.3.3 *The Overview of Missionaries in the Dii Land*

In the course of the period 1933 to 1974 a great number of overseas missionaries made an acquaintance with the Dii people for shorter or longer time. They sojourned either in the Dii land or in other appropriate places of the country. But Ngaoundéré was their main centre. The city of Ngaoundéré was their primary place of arrival and also the place many of them were located at the end of their stay.

The first missionaries were not all pastors but there are all evangelists according to their work among pupils. They had different professions qualification such as carpenters, teachers, nurses, deacons and pastors. In appendix<sup>53</sup> we have listed those who dedicated their life on the Dii plain. The missionary work was not only the evangelization outreach with the word of God but a pastoral care spiritually, materially, and intellectually or culturally. So, one can described their perspective as holistic.

In short, the arrival of Johannes Thrana in the Dii land initiated a new era in the history of the Dii people by the establishment of the ELCC. The Dii land became an important field of mission in the work of the NMS. With the coming of the gospel through the overseas missionaries and the social political profile they took on in their work, it is possible to say that their struggle was a realization of a variant a theology of liberation. They also contributed to extend general human rights to the Dii people.

As succeeded in their achievement to freed slaves and built on institution of education, they

---

<sup>52</sup> Jean-Claude Muller, « Merci à vous, les Blancs, de nous avoir libérés ! » : le cas des Dii de l'Adamaoua (Nord-Cameroun) in *Terrain*, no.28 (miroirs du colonialisme), 1997, 59-72.

<sup>53</sup> Appendix A

prepared the ground for passing the role of mission work on to the Dii people themselves.

## Chapter Three

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE DII CHRISTIANITY

The focus on the role of the Dii people points out how Dii people became the primary agent of mission beside overseas missionaries. This part of the study provides some relevant details concerning the growth, nature and insight of the Dii workers in mission.

#### 3.1 The Growth of the Dii workers in mission

The increased number of the Dii workers in mission started by the empowerment of the Dii people through the establishment of some didactic institutions. The first national workers in the Dii land were hired among the former student of the primary school of mission, the bible school and the theological school.

##### 3.1.1 *The Primary School of Mission*

In this part we try to reconstruct the rise of Christianity stress on basic institutions through which missionary activities brought to massive conversions on the Dii land. The first contact of the missionaries with the local people began with the establishment of primary mission schools. The Norwegian missionary, Johannes Thrana and his team visited the Dii land around 1933 and launched their work among the Dii people one year after their settlement. In 1934 the first mission schools on the Dii land were set up in two villages namely Karna and Mbé. The first teachers of these mission schools were not recruited from the Dii people but two nationals originally from Southern Cameroon. In 1934 under the supervision of Johannes Thrana the first teachers arrived to the Dii land. He placed Martin in Karna but Pierre Ndjemba and Emini settled in Mbé.

One year later in 1935 two more villages precisely Ndom and Wack welcomed two new southern Cameroonian teachers Etienne Mwal who settled in Ndom and Jean Mba in Wack.<sup>54</sup> These Southern Cameroonians were not from the SM or the NMS association but from the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian missionaries worked among the people of Southern Cameroon for several years precisely from 1913. They founded schools and trained national workers for mission work. We can say that this network between members of different mission associations was a sign of good will between the western missionaries in Cameroon.

---

<sup>54</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 43.

This cooperation showed to what extent education was important for the plantation of the mission work in a new mission field. For the pioneer missionaries in the Dii land also the expansion of the mission work matched with education of the national workers. The opening of many schools in the Dii land with the help of these national teachers took in account this consideration. Any statistic of the pupils attending the classes is not available.

But after a few years many new mission schools were opened in several villages on the Dii land. The southern teachers left the work because they faced too many difficulties during their stay. They felt that their salary was low and they were charged by the Lamido of Ngaoundéré with the support of the French colonial administration who were both against the emergence of mission schools in the Dii land. With all these pressures these teachers felt uncomfortable and they left the Dii land. However former Dii pupils from the mission school took over the work in many areas as “catechist-teachers” responsible both for the church and school. So, in 1937 Paul Bobbo became the first Dii “catechist-teacher” in Mbé and Etienne Bobo became the first Dii “catechist-teacher” in Tagboum village located about 34 km towards the east of Mbé. But one had to wait for about two years to see the emergence of other Dii workers in the mission field. A new spring of national workers began in 1939 when Paul Mbarbella settled as “catechist-teacher” in Man village, Daniel Bobbo in Karna-Manga and Belmont Dourmani in Tagboum.<sup>55</sup>

In 1939 with the growth in number of national workers the mission schools were expanded fast on the Dii land, but restriction was made for the chiefdom of the Lamido of Rey who was against education. He was afraid of the impact of education in the life of his subjects and his authority. Officially Halfdan Endresen addressed an application to open the schools in the chiefdom of Rey in 1939 when he paid visit to the colonial administrator in Garoua and to the Lamido of Rey.<sup>56</sup> So, the missionaries established school-churches in some villages of this chiefdom in 1938 with the placement of André Oumarou in Karba Keroua, 1939 of Daniel Abdou in Lenda-Manga and Paul Mbarbella in Mayo Sala, 1940 of Etienne Bobo in Gamba, 1942 of Thomas Maidawa in Mayo Sala, and 1955 of Matthieu Kadia in Ganani.<sup>57</sup>

In according with our findings during the field work around ten school-churches were operating in the Dii land from 1933 to 1955. The mission school of Ngaouyanga was the most

---

<sup>55</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 211.

<sup>56</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 46.

<sup>57</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 331-333.

important because it had more classes compared to others. In fact most of the mission schools were operating with one or two classes. According to each case after class one or class two pupils had to join the mission school of Ngaounyanga to fulfil their study. Until 1955 even Ngaounyanga have not had an official centre of examination for the First Living Certificate. The pupils who had the desire to submit that official examination had to go to Bankim where an official centre of examination was established by the State.

Initially it was difficult for parents to send their children at school. Even so the missionaries encouraged these parents to send their kids at school. One of our informants told that the parents discussed the supervision of kids with teachers. They wanted their kids to help out with work to the farm while teachers and overseas missionaries wanted them for education. Teachers and missionaries used small gifts such as materials for study, arm board, pieces of chalk, pencils, and books to attract kids from the household to bring them to school. At the end of the class school goers brought back home these stuffs they have from school. They made exciting commentaries of their discoveries towards non school goers. These brought the latter to decision to go at school. By then the mission school had more pupils. Unfortunately when the kids went to school and came back home after the class the parents refused to feed them. They claimed that they were lazy and did not help them enough in the farm work.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, the information collected during our field work shows that the pupils were not always forced to go to school but they also went by themselves. Erik Larsen tells the story of Etienne Bobo, one of the first school goers in Mbé. He said that once Etienne Bobo had been to the marketplace of Laure village with his uncle to buy and sell. During his stay in this village he saw someone reading everyday in the register the names of his employees. He was impressed, so that he decided to join the school when an opportunity came. When the missionaries founded the school in Mbé he was one of the first pupils. He called with him one of his good friends. He became one of the first Dii teachers and pastors in the Dii land.<sup>59</sup> One of our informants told us a similar story about the free choice of the school goers. He says that according to the practice the pupils should be presented to the school teacher by their parents at school. But some pupils decided to go to school willingly while others became school goers by curiosity. He says “I was walking in the street, suddenly I saw the pupils marching by. It was very exciting for me and I jumped into the line incognito. It was my first school day.”<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Informant F. Interview realized in Mbé, 21.07.11.

<sup>59</sup> Larsen, *Kamerun*, 41.

<sup>60</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 27.07.11.

For the love of school one of my informants asserted that Pierre Saboulou and three other schools boys left Mbé in 1956 to take their First Living Certificate walking for three weeks to reach the centre of examination located at that time in Bankim. According to one of these pupils who had made the trip, in 1956 he left Mbé and went to Yoko via Ngaoundéré and Galim where he took the First Living Certificate School (CEPE) in 1957. In 1958 those who succeeded to the Common Entrance had the opportunity to fulfil their education to the Protestant College of Ngaoundéré newly created. He stated that there he met some new Dii classmates as Pierre Laouan and Martin Dadjé. They took the training until the third form which was the summit in this college and were sent as teachers to different mission schools in the Dii land as followed Jean Yaya was sent in Sassa Mberssi, Luc Adamou in Nyadou, Pierre Laouan in Toubaka and André Yaya in Mbé. In 1963 some of them came back to the college where they were graduated of the Secondary First Certificate (BEPC). But before their admittance into the fourth form they should repeat the third form in order to take the German Language exam.

Moreover, we remarked that education became a main paradigm of mission that replaced the direct mode of evangelization, since a number of religious topics were dealt with on the school agenda. It is also of great importance to note that NMS educational policy was similar as the one earlier in South Africa where Jørgensen says that:

The Norwegian group of missionaries in South Africa were, of course, children of their time, and when considering their mostly modest social background and deficient level of education, they cannot be expected to have more harboured views fundamentally different from those prevalent in general.”<sup>61</sup> (Jørgensen 1990, 87)

When it comes to Cameroon the teaching in these primary schools was more similar to the bible school than the secular school. It was clear for all that the role of the mission school teachers in the Dii land was not so different from the role of other western mission schools in this period. The school teachers in the Dii land did not also teach much more than elementary reading and writing, some mathematics and most of all the basic Christian teachings and prayers. In addition the teaching of Catechism, Confession of the Faith and singing of the Psalms were the common features of the primary school of mission. Not many secular subjects were taught along with the daily class teaching on religious matters. Little by little the school of mission began to be used as the main instrument of conversion to Christianity.

---

<sup>61</sup> Jørgensen, *Contact and Conflict*, 1990, 85



According to Aggée the disciplines of the Basel mission school in Southern Cameroon included calculation, the doctrine, writing and reading.<sup>62</sup> Both the Basel and the NMS missionaries refused to include too much secular teaching in the schedule of the study. They thought that secular knowledge could bring a negative impact and disturb the goal with emancipation of pupils. According to them emancipation of pupils could affect the mission work. They wanted to keep their pupils for the mission work and prevented them to fly away after the study. With the limited level of religious knowledge the pupils could not escape the mission work. They could not apply for a job in the public service. Only the church offered the opportunity to work with the religious knowledge. So after their study the pupils were supposed to work only for the outreach of the church and not in the public service of the State.

In addition the primary schools did not only prepare a setting to mission work, they became the very centre of the Christian community. The school building housed the school class as well as the church services. Bengt Sunkler about the similar context mentions that “the building served at the same time as local chapel.”<sup>63</sup> On the Dii land pupils used also the school building as classroom for all the week and on Sunday it was transformed into a chapel. It was also used to celebrate the prayer meetings in the evenings during the week. According to Drønen these mission schools “became important arena of transmission of an extended mission, a mission of evangelization and civilization.”<sup>64</sup> This assertion confirms the understanding that the mission school allowed its pupils to serve with a double vocational capacity after their study. This means that former pupils of the mission schools played double role back home. They had professional occupation in their social life on one hand and they were witnesses of the Christian faith on the other hand. This was an alternative solution to the chronic lack of national ministers available for the local ministry. Moreover, the national intellectuals helped out in different ways later when the school system was changed with the introduction of more secular disciplines. Some of them became nurses in the clinics founded by missionaries. They took care of patients in accordance with Christian ethics. Others worked in the public service of the State when mission schools implemented secular teachings under the supervision of the state. They initiated new congregations or they became the dynamic members of existing congregations of their different locations. One of our informants confirms this when he claims “I am proud of the good witness that former pupils of mission schools carry out with them in the public service of state. They work with

---

<sup>62</sup> Aggée, *Sociétés et ritualités religieuses au Cameroun sous domination Française*, 152.

<sup>63</sup> Sundkler, *A history of Church in Africa*, 267.

<sup>64</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 84.

Christian standard faith wisely and honestly.”<sup>65</sup> Beside the western missionaries a new generation of Dii intellectuals grew up ready for the mission work both inside and outside church institutions.

But the increasing need for professional church ministers compelled the missionaries to begin a special and proper training for church ministers.

### *3.1.2 The Bible School*

The development of competence and Christian ethics of the Dii people shaped through the mission school corresponded with the missionary belief that also the Bible School could contribute to the training for the ministry.

In 1938 the Bible School established in Ngaoundéré allowed to train the first Dii catechists. The missionaries felt that the number of untrained catechists was a problem, but they missed appropriate training to acquire a professional profile to improve the work. This was the main motivation behind the opening of the Bible School to train catechists. Initially the number of the candidates was small. The first Dii candidates of this school were Paul Mbarbella from 1938 to 1939 and David Saboulou from 1945 to 1946. After a few years of catechetical work the both candidates were ordained pastors in accordance with the decision of missionaries to train the national pastors for the mission work. From 1944 to 1945 André Siroma achieved his study in the Bible School and he was immediately recruited as teacher in the same school. He never came to work as catechist but he served as school teacher in many mission schools. Unfortunately he left the mission school and he was recruited as State school teacher in 15<sup>th</sup> June 1959 in Guidiguis.<sup>66</sup>

In 1946 the missionaries decided to build a bible school in the Dii land. This first bible school in the Dii land was established in Ngaouyanga village under the strong pressure for the mission work. Two different motives nourished the management of the Bible School. Firstly, the bible school in Ngaoundéré was located far away for those of the young Dii who wanted to take the same training. Secondly, the missionaries wanted to train younger Dii to help out the work in the mission field. The need for the mission work was considerable and there were just few missionaries. We don't know too much about the first year of this school. But one informant said that it was used to build classes and students used little time for lectures. The

---

<sup>65</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 27.07.11.

<sup>66</sup> André Siroma. *Témoignage sur ma deuxième vocation (unpublished manuscript)*, 1986, 4.

missionaries believed that the Bible School could strengthen the national candidates and gave them better skills for the mission work than the primary mission school. The focus was of course bible studies but the pupils were also expected to have a practical knowledge of reading and writing in order to act as both catechists and teachers. According to the information we collected from our field work the first training school experience for nationals was fruitful and very exciting. The candidates were volunteers who accepted the appeal for the mission work among their brothers and sisters in the countryside and in the neighbouring tribes. But the training program initiated here presented an opportunity for teaching and for strengthening the students themselves. It also developed their competence of teaching and preaching to their own people.

In 1947 according to one of our informants the class started with nine candidates namely Pierre Bangawa, Paul Hamadjida, Mbarsola, Ovanda Sambo, Magadji Oumarou, Simon Kanou and Bawa the last one was a candidate from Yoko. The training lasted two years from 1947 to 1949. Johannes Thrana conducted the first year of the training in Ngaouyanga but the second year was completed in the Bible School of Ngaoundéré because of lack of teachers required for good training.<sup>67</sup> The candidates of this class were trained and sent as catechists anywhere on the mission field under the supervision of the NMS missionaries. Among them Pierre Bangawa and Paul Hamadjida became pastors after many years of catechetical work on the basis of extra training. One can say that through the Bible School the aim of the missionaries to train nationals for mission work became more and more realistic.

In 1950 and 1951 the sources available shown that fourteen candidates were registered for the study in the Bible School of Ngaouyanga.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the assessment of these catechists the training was also important for evangelization on the mission field. The training of candidates encompassed the three main lines of doctrinal, moral and intellectual responsibilities. Intellectually candidates learned writing and reading to be able to correspond with missionaries and communicate the Christian's faith to people. Regarding doctrine they studied Catechism, Church History and the bible study which constituted the core of their faith. In the moral perspective they learnt how to be leaders of a congregation to avoid non-Christian behaviour which was meant to cause the disaster to those to whom they wanted to communicate the Christian faith. In short, the Bible School was a bible class for catechist candidates. At the end of the study candidates of the Bible School were appointed as

---

<sup>67</sup> Informant G. Interview realized in Mbé 24.07.11.

<sup>68</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 241.

catechists for the mission work. The expansion of the mission work in the Dii land was also tributary to these devoted national allies of evangelization.

But the Bible School of Ngaouyanga closed down in 1953 after three years of fruitful activity. This school produced more than twenty catechists for the mission work. At the same time the missionaries shifted to another aim that consisted in the training of national clerics for the pastoral care on the mission field. The candidates were redirected to the Pastor School at that time created in Meng.

### *3.1.3 The School of Theology*

Beside the primary mission school and the bible school the third level of training for church workers was the Pastor School. This Pastor School prepared the basis for the creation of the School of Theology.

In 1953 the NMS opened a Pastor School in Meng to solve the problem of lack of the national pastors on the mission field. In addition the missionaries evaluated the work of catechists. They believed that their work could improve if they were better trained. It was with these considerations that the Pastor School started in 1953 and ended in 1956. The school admitted just only candidates who had been already working as catechists.<sup>69</sup> Three Dii catechists, Daniel Abdou, Etienne Bobo and Thomas Maïdawa were admitted to this training. Their classmates were Pierre Baba and Matthieu Belinga from Yoko, Othon Houngue and Zacharie from the Tikar ethnic group; and Paul Darman from the Gbaya ethnic group. Paul Darman, however, was a candidate from the SM mission society who should normally be trained in Cholliré in the Fulani language. He was directed to Meng because the lecture was done in French and his colleague Paul Sippison continued his study in Cholliré. During the training the candidates were taught how to teach Catechism and the principle of pastoral conduct. They were supposed to acquire enough knowledge for reading and writing that could enable them to act efficiently as pastors at the end of their study. The first groups of the Dii pastors were ordained after four years of study in this school. Thomas Maïdawa first was ordained pastors on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1956 in Mbé. Daniel Abdou and Etienne Bobo were ordained on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1957 in Ngaoundéré.<sup>70</sup> Through ordination of these pastors the Dii people had their first clergymen for the accomplishment of the pastoral ministry. The Pastor School trained just one level of group of students that the candidates themselves kindly named

---

<sup>69</sup> Torstein Jørgensen, *I tro og tjeneste: Det Norske Misjonsselskap: 1842 1992, vol.II*, Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolen, 1992, 47.

<sup>70</sup> Drønen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon*, 211.

“the promotion zero.”<sup>71</sup> After this the SM and NMS missionaries founded the School of Theology of Meiganga to increase the level and the number of pastors according to the growth of the church and global change of the society.

In 1957 the genuine training for pastors shifted to Meiganga with the establishment of the School of Theology. The same year, this School of Theology recruited the first group of students for four years study. The Norwegian missionary Einar Follesøy led the new School of Theology. This group of student of twelve candidates numbered five Dii candidates, Pierre Bangawa, Paul Hamadjida, Paul Mbarbella, Jean Meigari and David Saboulou. Most of them have been catechists or evangelists and devoted during their work. Although they were elected for their vocation, this higher level of study in theology required also an intellectual competence. Therefore they took an extra lecture to improve their knowledge in French for one year before they were admitted into the School of Theology. They completed their Studies in 1961 and the same year one of them Paul Hamadjida was ordained. The ordination of the rest of the candidates took place in 1962. This ordination increased the number of Dii pastors. It brought a new impetus of Christian faith among the Dii people and a new impulse for pastoral care throughout their work.

In 1962 the second group of students at the School of Theology was recruited. Among eleven candidates five Dii candidates were admitted in the School of Theology in Meiganga. Those who had a low education level were supposed to take more education for one year in order to improve their academic level before entering the School of Theology. Initially six Dii candidates applied for admittance. But five of them successfully passed the entrance examination, Gabriel Mvodji, Gaston Dadi, Joël Mohaman, Paul Abanda and Matthieu Kadia. The rest of the candidates were from different ethnic groups. Some came from the region of Yoko, others from the Baya ethnic group. Those who failed the entrance examination were simply sent back to their village. They went back home and continued to serve the Lord as teachers, catechists or evangelists. The enrolled candidates took four years of study with the completion in Mars 1966.<sup>72</sup> After their study all of them were ordained the same year except Gaston Dadi who was ordained one year after in 1967. The ordination of the Dii pastors from the School of Theology of Meiganga empowered the mission enterprise both in the Dii land and elsewhere they were appointed for work.

---

<sup>71</sup> Informant D. Interview realised in Molde, 04.01.11.

<sup>72</sup> Informant F. Interview realized in Mbé, 21. 07.11.

From the “school-churches” to the school of theology via the bible school a new figure of national workers alongside the western missionaries. They played different roles on the mission as school masters and as church leaders, and as pastors, catechists and evangelists. In short the emerging of these opportunities brought not only the growth of local pillars for mission work but widened the mission field itself. It brought also the emergence of hierarchy of church leaders. From the non professional indigenous workers to “catechist-teacher” the mission work welcomed a class of national ordained pastors that spread the Christian faith and made the national mission more effective.

### **3.2 The home missionaries among the Dii people**

It is important to note that the western missionaries started their mission work by establishing some keys institutions such as schools and churches. When the national workers were involved their work grew from the same path. We will in the follow focus on the role of lay people, women and church leaders in the outreach of the church.

#### *3.2.1 The Role of Lay People*

In our discussion on the role of lay people we want to highlight the contribution of the chiefs in the growth of the church in the Dii land. Many categories of lay men took part in the spread and growth of the mission work in the Dii land. Some were teachers as already mentioned, but some were also the chiefs of the village. The chiefs were one of the most important categories of lay men who contributed to the plantation and the growth of mission work in the Dii land. Two opposite cases, Rey and Mbé, attracted our attention when focusing on the establishment of the mission in Dii land.

In Mbé the encounter of the chief with missionaries was a positive experience. The implementation of the Christian faith came from the chief of Mbé, named Kumba as we exposed in a previous chapter. He already from the very beginning exerted a positive attitude to the plantation of mission work on his land. He even encouraged his people to welcome Christianity and to “build the house for God.”<sup>73</sup> As Bengt Sunkler stated the traditional rulers had more power to engage the villagers both spiritually and socially. He asserted that for the school houses “all were built by the local community. If the chief insisted and sent a sufficient number of workers, such building could be ready in a day or two.”<sup>74</sup> Back to the Lamido of Mbé his opening to Christianity had an impact on his people. As a result many “school-

---

<sup>73</sup> Larsen, *Kamerun*, 40.

<sup>74</sup> Sundkler, *A history of Church in Africa*, 267.

churches” grew up in the Dii land in a short time period. Many Dii people converted from animism to Christianity. Christianity became a dominant religion in the entire chiefdom of Mbé. The relationship between the chiefdom and the church workers gave a central role to the church leaders in the village as Lamin Sanneh underline “in former times, the religious practitioner of the village was normally one of the most important counsellors of the Chief.”<sup>75</sup>

In contrast, both towards the south and north of the Mbé chiefdom there was a strong resistance to Christianity. The Fulani Lamibbe were against Christianity and fought strongly against the plantation of missionary institutions on their territories. Thus, the Lamido of Rey refused for a long time the establishment of schools in his chiefdom, persecuted Christians and burned churches. In 1952 he expelled the few “catechist-teachers” placed by the NMS from his territory.<sup>76</sup> In 1967 and 1970 around 40 churches were burned under the attack of the Lamido of Rey.<sup>77</sup> As consequence in the areas where the chiefs were hostile to mission work the people became less educated and developed. In the places where the traditional rulers were open to mission work and education the villages soon developed better and people were socially and politically upright.

But the lay group of men who influenced the mission work were recruited also of pupils from the mission primary school who had reach the end of their study. Some of these lay people worked after their primary school as social, political and religious leaders. The emergence of these new educated elites was an advantage for the expansion of mission work. Based on this we can agree with Bengt Sundkler that “mission school in Africa was largely an extension of the catechumens’ class.”<sup>78</sup> They were Christianized and many of them had been baptized at school during the school year. Numbers of lay men and women who had converted to Christianity scattered in the Dii land and carried the mission work to its great success. At the beginning official diploma were not required to get a job as teachers or assistants of both ecclesiastical and colonial institutions. Some knowledge of theories and language of communication was enough. The first pupils from the mission school as Daniel Abdou, for example, started his work in 1936 as an interpreter in Ngaoundéré and gradually became catechist and finally pastor after a professional training at the Pastor School in Meng. And in 1945 André Siroma became a teacher in the Bible School of Ngaoundéré where he was

---

<sup>75</sup> Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (Eds), *The Changing Face of Christianity*, 98.

<sup>76</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 89.

<sup>77</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 236-236.

<sup>78</sup> Sundkler, *A history of Church in Africa*, 636.

previously a pupil and later teacher at the mission school of Ngaoundéré. The way that the national Dii workers were selected was in line with the common practice of pioneer missionaries for the implementation of the mission work everywhere. Aggée, in the case of Presbyterian mission society, states that the first mission schools extended into different places lead by the former pupils of mission schools who had little secular knowledge but very good knowledge of the Christian faith.<sup>79</sup> In the Dii land it seems like the first pupils of the primary school of mission carried the burden of mission work regardless their working inside or outside the church institutions. They worked for the establishment of congregations elsewhere.

The lay people were somehow the pillars of the growth of the church. One must take into account that in the beginning there were no catechists, evangelists or pastors but only lay men and women. Through the training of lay people the opportunity was given to them to change and improve their status. Some of the lay people took the status of catechist, evangelist and pastors. Many of them worked as school teachers as we mentioned before but some workers served in other institutions established by missionaries. Therefore, whether recruited in different institutions of the church or state, lay educated people played an important role in the propagation of the Christian faith.

Even many workers in the colonial administration and political leaders had studied for a while in one of the mission schools that had been established throughout the country. The fact that many of them chose a vocation apart from the church service they did not drop their Christian commitment. They continued to share a common understanding of their Christian faith. In 1961 the testimony left by the Prime Minister of the government of Cameroon, Charles Assale, visiting Ngaoundéré during the struggle against slavery in Northern Cameroon safeguarded the picture of Christianity. Kåre Lode stated that Charles Assale acknowledged publicly that he was an orphan who had been bred and educated by missionaries.<sup>80</sup> Likewise the lay people were living witnesses that strengthened and spread the Christian faith where they were given responsibilities to work. The lay people were able to recognize the value of Christianity in their social and spiritual life. The result was that many well educated people played an important role in the development of the country. One of our informants said that he knew so many pupils from the mission school who worked in different administration services

---

<sup>79</sup> Aggée, *Sociétés et ritualités religieuses au Cameroun sous domination Française*, 152.

<sup>80</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 120.



of the state with Christian life standard.<sup>81</sup>

In the long run Christianity spread through common people telling to their neighbours about Christ followed by joint initiatives to establish churches.

### *3.2.2 The Role of Women*

Women were very important in the process of evangelization in the Dii land. One cannot speak of church planting in the Dii land without mentioning the gender perspective in the mission work and pointing to the protagonist role of women.

The contribution of women in the outreach of the church was implemented in many ways. Women had already from the arrival of Christianity among the Dii been the first witnesses towards the rest of the society. The women witnessed their faith to their husband, kids and to their friends. The life of the Dii Christian women was developing within this frame of relationship. The testimonies of women show that the mission work had not only been the concern of men the women have indeed taken part too. The case of one woman named Marie Didi is an example. She was the second wife married to the father of André Siroma, one of the first Dii teachers at the mission school of Ngaouyanga in 1950. She was converted to Christianity through the teaching of Thomas Maïdawa, “catechist-teacher” in Tagboum from 1949 to 1952. When she was baptized she started a large network with other women during her stay in Tagboum village. Later when she moved to her husband’s house in Mbé as a house wife involved in a polygamous marriage it was a big challenge for her to continue to live a Christian life. Marie Didi had to struggle to attend the Sunday worship. Our informant asserted that her husband used to allocate a part of his farm to his wives for labour each day even on Sunday. This was not an obstacle for her to attend to the Sunday service. On Sunday she woke up early in the morning ran to the farm and worked very fast until she completed her own parcel. When she finished she went back home for worship with other Christians. She overcame her condition of house wife to serve the church. Our informant added that during her stay in Falak she gathered many people and taught them the gospel. Her zeal brought her from farm to farm and from compound to compound to tell the story of the Gospel. The church recognized the effort of Marie Didi according to the result of her work. Later in 1951 the church sent to her two catechists, André Souka and Jean Maïgari, to help out with the work in this mission field. Marie Didi worked all her life as elder and catechist in the

---

<sup>81</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 25.07.11.

community of Falak until she passed away.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand the women movement named “Women for Christ” enabled women to take part in the mission work. In fact great work was done by missionary women as soon they arrived to attract women to Christian faith and motivate their network for the outreach of the church in the primary mission schools, training schools and in the mission field. In 1957 for example there were 63 school girls over 220 pupils in the mission schools of Mbé. In the training school, for example the Bible schools and school of theology the missionary women organized the women classes for students’ wives. They taught them Bible study, hygiene, foods process and sewing. In the mission field these women transmitted the same knowledge to their peers. Further more the missionary women in the field of mission were doing the same work in the meeting with house wives. They moved from place to place to implement these activities. These local meetings of women shaped little by little a broad women network in the church. According to Kåre Lode the systemization of women activities in the church started in 1971 by Aslaug Bjoraa but the name “Women of Christ” was first given in 1975 with Verna Syverson as first director. In 1984, a national woman, Marie Satou took over the direction of “Women of Christ” and in 1985 the movement numbered about 11,000 women.<sup>83</sup>

When our informant was questioned about the contribution of national women to the mission work she claimed: “we were doing the same work as our husbands were doing”<sup>84</sup> This claim highlighted how deep the impact of the gender role in the outreach of the church was. The “Women for Christ” organized so many meeting for women and they preached the gospel among women. Our informant says that once they organized a meeting called Women Conference in a village named Dawan around 1966. Since the meeting was held on the traditional authorities of Rey, the lords of the region planned to visit the neighbouring village. So the women of the conference cleaned up the village and the heyday they lined up alongside the road. When the traditional authorities passed by the place they applauded as the insights of respect and honour towards them. In contrast the people of the village these authorities were supposed to visit did not do so. The way the women for Christ welcomed these authorities reversed the picture of Christians, who had been considered as wicked people by these authorities. The traditional authorities were very impressed by the picture left by “Women for Christ” and they congratulated them. And from there the traditional authorities who were very

---

<sup>82</sup> Informant F. Interview realized in Mbé, 21.07.11.

<sup>83</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 170-173.

<sup>84</sup> Informant G. Interview realized in Mbé, 27. 07.11.

harsh towards Christians changed their attitude toward Christianity.

The dynamism of the “Women for Christ” was to some extent very sensitive. Their activities functioned in many places as a unifying network. The movement of the “Women for Christ” on occasions could also function as a group of pressure. In 1973 for example when the wall of the chapel in Nyambaka was built the authorities of the region forbade the Christians to amend the roof. Despite this prohibition for Christians to finish the roof of the building, the women dared to hold their meeting in this roofless chapel. The great number of people gathering during the meeting sent a strong signal towards the authorities of the region. David Saboulou, one of the pastors of the Church, made a trip from Ngaoundéré to Nyambaka to comfort them during the meeting. They welcomed their pastor with great emotion. Our informant recognizes that the visit of the pastor brought comfort to the group of “Women for Christ” gathering there and to other Christians of the community.<sup>85</sup>

### *3.2.3 The Role of the Dii Church Leaders*

The Dii church leaders were mostly former students of the primary mission school, bible school or school of theology. Some differentiation has to be observed among church leaders when we speak of their role in the extension of the church and in the society in general. There were two classes of church leaders, those who were ordained and those who were not ordained.

On the one hand the mission work was implemented by the non-ordained “catechist-teachers.” It appeared that although the role of these “catechist-teachers” was large their responsibility was limited. Thus, when catechists were working with western missionaries they acted more as their assistants and they played the role of interpreters. When they were operating on their own they could preach and organize meetings in the churches. In short they were in this way responsible for evangelization in the local areas. The contribution of catechists was similar to the role of teachers. They could sometime play a double role in the mission field as catechists and teachers. In this way they were generally responsible for the foundation of churches and they were also the first teachers in the mission schools in the village. They used their little knowledge of foreign language to focus on the education of pupils and evangelization of people they encountered on their mission field. The plantation of the church in the Dii land was to a large extent done by the involvement of these primary workers of mission as catechists, evangelists or teachers.

---

<sup>85</sup> Informant G. Interview realized in Mbé, 27.07.11.

As many pupils were trained in the bible school the mission field was widened. These workers in turn did a great task of evangelization. They evangelized the people of remote areas that western missionaries could not reach. They brought Christianity to adults and young people and drew many of them to faith and vocation. For Jean Pierre Messina the contribution of catechists in the early missionary era was most important for the expansion of Christianity.<sup>86</sup> They were ministers de facto in the mission field because they were leaders of small or large communities. They also taught catechism and prepared candidates for baptism. They were doing everything except the administration of sacraments. This right was reserved to the ordained pastors who were mostly overseas missionaries. As a “non-ordained ministers” they could not celebrate the Holy Communion and could not baptize those they converted. Baptism and the celebration of the Holy Communion took place only on the occasion of the visit of the ordained overseas pastors.

On the other hand the life of the Christian community was indeed motivated also by ordained ministers. In addition to the preaching the ordained ministers were responsible for celebration of baptism and Holy Communion. The presence of the pastor in an area restrained sometime the reputation of the non-ordained church workers. The vast network of ordained and non-ordained workers was very important and their cooperation led to a massive conversion among the Dii people. In reality these ordained and non-ordained church workers acted as evangelists. Our informant who experienced church meeting and campaigns in this period asserted that they worked together and organized evangelization in the villages. When evangelists arrived in a village they applied for an interview with the chief of the village and presented their aim and agenda. Then the chief gave them the possibility to hold the meeting. He stated that generally the entire village attended the opening of the meeting sometime also the chief of the village attended the meeting personally, if not he sent the member of his court to represent him. The meeting began most of the times by some hymns and the messenger took the floor for preaching. They used only a few tracts and extract from the New Testament sometimes translated in a “broken” language. After the preaching if there were some request for conversion, that person was generally baptized right away. In other cases if they were not immediately baptized the church leader organized a public ceremony of baptism later. The newly converted were baptized publicly and the ceremony ended by the celebration of the Holy Communion. The way that everything was organized gave a real input to the growth in number of Christians and the planting of the church in many villages.

---

<sup>86</sup> Messina, *Histoire du christianisme au Cameroun*, 201.

Broadly speaking, we can also say that the settlement of western missionaries and the plantation of the mission school shaped the mission work in the Dii land. The establishment of school of theology and bible schools stimulated the professional training for ministers according to different needs in the mission field. Our informant asserted that he has no doubt that it was the national evangelists, pastors, and lay peoples who did “the lion’s share of the work”<sup>87</sup> on the mission field. According to my informant the speedy growth did not take place because highly educated pastors had instructed their congregations in Christian faith, but to the fact that “the first Catechists were humble and strategic.”<sup>88</sup> The explosive growth of Christianity in the Dii land was obtained mainly by the zeal of these church leaders. The role of these home missionaries initiated a new era of mission exerted national Christians themselves.

The initiative of home mission also came to extend beyond the Dii land by the Dii people in good cooperation of overseas missionaries.

### **3.3 The reaching out of the Dii campaign**

Through the presentation of the campaign we do not try only to understand the Christianity of the Dii people but also to acknowledge the impact of the Dii church workers’ testimony towards their followers. This seems to be the best way to understand the part of the Dii missionary enterprise in the north, centre and south of the Dii land. There the work was done with a minimal supervision of the western missionaries.

#### *3.3.1 The Campaign in the Centre of the Dii Land*

When people speak about Christianity in the Dii land one of the most often mentioned local communities is Mbé village. It establishes that if Ngaouyanga hosted the first structure of mission work, from 1951 the major missionary activities were led in Mbé. The first Norwegian missionaries settled in Mbé and the first missionary institutions such as schools and hospitals were also first established in the Mbé Village. The village of Mbé, as it is said, took both the picture of Jerusalem and Athens alike because there one could find both school-churches for the development of religion and intellectual knowledge. Mbé was the main village that enabled the growth of Christianity to take place before expanding throughout the entire Dii land. Our survey and many scholars both recognize that this region was chosen by Norwegian missionaries because of its strategic position. The village of Mbé hosted one of the

---

<sup>87</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré in 27.07.11.

<sup>88</sup> Informant F. Interview realized in Mbé, 21.07.11.

important Norwegian missionary stations from which missionary activities were directed towards the different mission fields through out the Dii land.<sup>89</sup> Missionaries with the help of national followers built in Mbé three institutions that the church needed for its holistic enterprise to attract more people such as school, hospital and chapel. This usage of the concept holistic means that, in the missionary enterprise of the church, the spiritual needs should not be disconnected from material desires. It also explains the fact that the eternal and temporal requirements should not be separated in such a way that the relationship to God should be translated into the relationship to his people. So there should be no gap between the mission of the church and social responsibility. Back to the Dii land the holistic mission, which encompasses mission activities that take in account the global requests of human, was fulfilled following the establishment of school for secular education, chapel for pastoral care and hospital for health care. According to this, it is convenient to say that the village of Mbé was not only the centre of Christianity, but also the most important city in the Dii land as well. It is understandable that it came to be the heart of Christian mission and as such the heart of the Christian faith in the Dii land. In this village many church workers were trained too and they were not used only in the Dii land but they were useful for the other groups of people in the process of the establishment of the ELCC. However the growth of the mission work was placed under the fire of the faith of the Dii workers in the mission field. And the rise of the itinerant ministers among the Dii people and their assessment intertwined with the good will of western missionaries. Thus the adjustment was made by the church for the emergence of Christian faith through this network for the expansion of the gospel. This fits with Jesus' statement of great commission through the claim that "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20: 21).<sup>90</sup> The communication of the Christian faith fulfilled this order in such a way that the national people received the prelude of Christian faith from western missionaries and brought it further. This picture highlights the itinerant ministry carried out by the Dii ministers in connection with Norwegian missionaries on the Dii land. Nevertheless, the Dii land emerged as a new stronghold of Christianity.

The Dii ministers went throughout the Dii land to spread the gospel. They moved from village to village to preach the gospel among their peers. According to his pattern one of the itinerant Dii ministers, Pierre Bangawa had a prolific pastoral career in his life. He his one of the pioneers through whom many Dii people came to believe in the Christian faith. Pierre

---

<sup>89</sup> Torstein Jørgensen, *I tro og tjeneste*, 1992, 17-20.

<sup>90</sup> *The Holy Bible*, 774.

Bangawa was born in 1927 in Wack. When the mission school was planted in his village in 1935 with Jean Mba as the first teacher he was seven years old. He attended the primary mission school of Wack until 1947 and he was admitted in the Bible school of Ngaounyanga for two years of study. So, in 1949 he started his catechetical activities in Wack by substituting Thomas Maïdawa and from there he was sent to Tagboun. When he was admitted at the School of theology in 1957 Simon Kanou took over the work in Tagboun. After his ordination as pastor he worked among his own people and also among other peoples to implement Christian faith. We know part of his missionary trip on the Dii land towards the chiefdom of Rey through one of his observers. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1968 one of our informants said that she made a journey toward the chiefdom of Rey with two other missionaries Solbjorg Pilskog and Helga Hedlesaker initiated by Pierre Bangawa and his followers. They were always welcomed by the chief and villagers. Their journey lasted two days walking across rivers, forest and villages. She mentioned that some chiefs, during their stay in one of the villages and two other neighbouring villages, offered them room and provided them with foods. In one of these villages no one was yet baptized. After a public preaching one old lady came to be baptized and when she took off her headscarf there were many talismans on her head. People says that these talismans were protected her from attack of bad spirits. When she was asked to remove them before her baptism she refused to take them away and Pierre Bangawa did not baptize her this day. The next day, in continuing the journey four persons were baptized during the meeting organized by Pierre Bangawa and his followers in another village. These groups of people were taught Catechism by the prince of this village himself named Abbo. He led this community since he left the mission school in 1958 until the arrival of a trained catechist. He was one of the former pupils of the mission school of Mbé ten years before. Abbo himself was not baptized and he wanted it. Unfortunately he was not because he was polygamous and the teaching of the church was against polygamy. Even so he remained active in this community that he founded by his faithfulness. Otherwise it was told that during a Christmas celebration Abbo bought a goat and celebrated the Christmas feast with the villagers. The Lamido of Rey was alerted and reacted negatively. He sent his army towards them. They invaded the village and arrested Christians of this village. They sent them in jail and they were forced to labour as punishment because of their faith. Abbo himself paid 5000 Fcfa, the amount required to be free from the cell and forced work. According to our informant when they arrived in another village they found that one person was baptized and lived there among the villagers. When the pastor got in touch with the people of the village, this man who was baptized but still owned a talisman, came on his own and gave his talisman

to the pastor. He confessed openly that he did not need a talisman any more since he became Christian. Along the trip four villages were visited and three times Pierre Bangawa baptized new converts. At the end of the trip about ten persons had been converted to Christianity and baptized.<sup>91</sup>

To a great extent, the Dii clergymen ministered itinerantly towards unreached people in the Dii land. They converted and baptized numbers of their own tribe and they took also part in several mission fields out of the Dii land.

### *3.3.2 The Campaign towards the North of the Dii Land*

The campaign in the north of the Dii land comprised the Dii territory included in the chiefdom of Rey. Double missionary activities were exerted in this territory, one under the supervision of the NMS missionaries and another under the management of the SM missionaries.

In 1938 the NMS missionaries started their evangelical activities in this area entirely included into the chiefdom of Rey. These efforts were limited to few villages on the margin of the chiefdom of Rey as we mentioned before. They operated with the help of Dii church workers from the chiefdom of Mbé, established as the centre of the missionary activities in the Dii land. For Erik Larsen<sup>92</sup> and similar to Kåre Lode the village of Mbé was a sort of “metropolis” in the Dii land. In 1955 the NMS missionaries had placed some Dii “catechist-teachers” in six villages when the Lamido of Rey expelled the church workers from this territory. He forced the Dii church workers to cease their evangelical activities in his territory after a short visit in Gamba of the famous Lamido of Mbé, named Kumba, claimed chief of the Dii land. He considered this visit as a thread to his authority and an attempt of annexation of this part of his territory. He pretended that the Lamido of Mbé used missionaries and Dii church leaders to weaken his lordship over the chiefdom of Rey.<sup>93</sup> Even so, the NMS missionaries kept these positions after the release but the rest of the territory was attributed to the SM missionaries.

If great evangelical works in the Dii land were done by the NMS missionaries, also the SM missionaries decided to extend also their mission field in the north of the Dii land. In 1951 an agreement was made between the NMS and the SM missionaries on this issue. On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1952 Mr. Husson, the French colonial officer introduced Beryl Sand to the Lamido of Rey who allowed him to settle in Tcholliré. It was clear that the heart of the

---

<sup>91</sup> Informant E. Interview realized in Stavanger, 28.03.11.

<sup>92</sup> Larsen, *Kamerun*, 40.

<sup>93</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 89.



chiefdom of Rey was closed to missionary activities and consequently there were no prepared Christian ground upon, or any educated persons, locally for the mission work. In establishing the mission work the missionaries relied on using diaconal services and Fulani language even if the inhabitants were composed by majority of Dii subjects and few Sara, Laka, Pana, Mbum in addition to the Fulani lords. He was joined one year after in 1953 by the couple Ingrid and Walter Trobisch. They started with health care service implemented by Ingrid Trobisch and Helen Jonson. In 1954 they also opened a professional training school specialized in mechanic, masonry and carpentry under the supervision of Ernest Johnson. In the very beginning this school Ernest Johnson had 20 pupils of whom eleven were Dii, six Laka, one Mbum, one Fulani and one Sara. It is noticeable that the number of pupils per tribe reflected the social composition in term of number of the population in the chiefdom of Rey in term of size. In this perspective it is relevant to describe the chiefdom of Rey as Dii land as maintaining by Muller.<sup>94</sup> Coming back to the development of the missionary activities the Lamido of Rey accepted the diaconal institutions like training school and health care service but he did not accept evangelization of his subjects. The vision of the Lamido of Rey reflects Bengt Sunkler's claim that "Cameroon welcomed the missions, not so much because of their religious message, but because of their schools."<sup>95</sup> Even so in 1954 the opening of this school in the mission station of Tcholliré resulting on evangelism. Kåre Lode asserts that in 1960 when the training school closed down because of the departure of the school master, Thomas Mvondo, 29 of the 104 pupils were baptized. He also stated that among the former pupils one became pastor, four evangelists and others were witnesses of the Christian faith elsewhere they lived.<sup>96</sup> In 1958 the SM missionaries opened a Bible School in Poli, one of their mission fields outside the chiefdom of Rey, to train catechists for evangelization in the surrounding areas of Rey and later in the heart of the chiefdom of Rey.

The NMS had another mission field in the south of the Dii land. And the flow of the Dii workers followed the extent of these mission fields according to the missionary policy of settlement in this time.

### **3.4 The controversy of the Dii Christianity**

The emergence of Christianity on the Dii land raised many controversies in the life of the church. The Dii Christians were victims of double crisis namely an identity crisis and a

---

<sup>94</sup> Muller, *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua*, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Sundkler, *A history of Church in Africa*, 266.

<sup>96</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 86.

spiritual crisis.

### *3.4.1 The Identity Crisis of the Dii Christians*

The encounter of the Dii people with Christianity was characterized by an identity crisis. The crisis began with the lack of use of Dii language in the missionary field. The Dii language did not have enough support at the very beginning and even later the translation of the Bible in the Dii language generated many controversies.

One of the crises that generated through the encounter between the Dii people and Christianity was the omission of the Dii language. One of our informants said that he has studied the Mbum language at the mission school in Ngaouyanga. He stated that when the Norwegian Missionaries came to Cameroon they sojourned first in the Mbum territories such as Ngaoundéré and in Tibati. They had learnt Mbum language during their stay in these places and they used it for communication and teaching. When they settled in the Dii land they opened schools and started to teach in the Mbum language to Dii pupils. Dii pupils were reading and writing the Mbum language at the mission school such that the Mbum language was used as the language of communication within the Christian communities.<sup>97</sup> This assertion echoes the claim of Kåre Lode that the missionaries had chosen the Mbum language as language of church. Dii Christians should absolutely learn Mbum language for further study of the gospel. If this policy was suitable for missionaries who had studied the Mbum language for their communication in the field, it was not comfortable for the Dii people themselves. This situation was difficult for the Dii communities who had never been to school even if it is a fact that the Dii people kept in touch with Mbum people. The Dii ministers were also obliged to teach Catechism and preach the gospel to their own people in Mbum language because the texts were only translated in Mbum language. The Dii people found that using the Mbum language was reinforcement of the Fulani's settlement whose supremacy was extended on Mbum people with Islamic features. They felt that their identity was in danger of extinction but they found also that missionary activities were meaningful for their social and spiritual life. The Dii church leaders were conscious of that their mother tongue was neglected as they continued to use the Mbum language. The motivation that enabled the Dii people to keep the Dii language alive came from this motto of one of the Dii church leaders who claimed that "the Dii language should never die."<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Informant C. Interview realized in Tibati, 31.07.11.

<sup>98</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 25.07.11

Even though the Dii language was neglected and it proved to be alive through the good will of some church leaders and church workers. In their effort to initiate the use of their mother tongue they faced a strong opposition. But Maïdawa Thomas, one of the Dii church leaders who had a dream in that issue did not gave up. He was just suspected be against the policy of the western ministry who wanted to establish the Mbum language as the language of the church. In our understanding it seemed to be an implementation of the policy of one church-one language. The stress on the usage of the Dii language was initiated in 1949 by Thomas Maïdawa when he was catechist in Wack. For him the use of the Dii language would reunite the Dii people. He started to preach the gospel in Dii language and he was so convinced that the Dii language would be alive in the church such that nothing could stop him to do so. One of the informants asserted that “the Dii Christians had composed many songs in the Dii language. During the worship one of them sang the solo and others repeated with rhythm. The tempo sounded really good.”<sup>99</sup> Pierre Selbé, one of the mission school teachers, was known as the most famous author of the Christian songs in Dii language. Kâre Lode ensures that he had composed a special song and the Dii Christians had sung this during the ordination of Thomas Maïdawa as pastor. In fact, despite the opposition of some missionaries, the evaluation of the Dii language was the decisive option that Thomas Maidawa could not give up. According to Kâre Lode the committee for the Bible translation into the Dii language was founded in 1962 in Mbé when the missionary conference allowed the Bible Society to help the people of Northern Cameroon to promote their mother tongue. This committee opened the way to Thomas Maïdawa and three other persons to enlarge the literature in Dii language. Thomas Maïdawa was the leader of this committee, Paul Issac and Abdou Daniel were members and Jan Håve Walle was the councillor. They produced many publications in Dii language as the collection of a hymn book in 1965, the Catechism and Gospel of Marc in 1966. The same year, in 1966 another team for the Dii language implementation was composed by Lee Bonhoff and Matthieu Kadia in Tcholliré. Later in 1970, Lee Bonhoff and Matthieu Kadia who have started the work in Tcholliré, joined the other translators in Mbé and Lars Lode alike. By their teamwork the NT was translated around the year 1978.<sup>100</sup> The same year the situation deteriorated because a strong disagreement rose among co-workers related to the management of the committee. Consequently, one of the teamwork leaders, Thomas Maïdawa left the committee and even the office of the Dii language literature was closed down for many years, and was reopened in 1982.<sup>101</sup> Through this it is understandable that after some

---

<sup>99</sup> Informant B. Interview realized in Stavanger, 30.03.11.

<sup>100</sup> *Lode, Appelés à la Liberté*, 214.

delay caused by western missionaries who gave more priority to the expansion of the Mbum language throughout the Dii territory, the emergence of the Dii language have faced another obstacle for its implementation. This tension affected also the relationship between Christians who supported team leaders of the committee from both sides.

This crisis jeopardised the life of the local community but did not destroy missionary activities within the church. This tension was one of the crises that in a certain period challenged Christian life and it leads us to the next point of the spiritual aspect of the crisis in Dii land.

### *3.4.2 The Spiritual Crisis among the Dii People*

The spiritual crisis among the Dii people in connection with the growth of Christianity points out some inconsistencies in the Dii Christianity. The Dii people did not live only their traditional religion to adopt Christianity but some of them also left Christianity to embraced Islam.

Through the encounter of the Dii people with Christianity Dii Christians knew about God based on the systematic teaching of the gospel at school and the preaching of church workers. Even if a few Dii people resisted the gospel, many of them accepted it unconditionally and Christianity overwhelmed the spiritual life of young educated generation in the Dii land. The traditional religion was no longer the only entrusted religion for the new educated generation on the Dii land but still relevant for the elders who had no contact with missionary teaching. For traditional religious practitioners Christianity had challenged the traditional spirituality of the Dii people. Christianity appeared as a serious threat to the traditional religion. Tremendous fears rose among the traditional religious practitioners; they felt that the gods of their ancestors were betrayed and they worried about the curse of the spirit of ancestors. The reaction of one member of the court of the Lamido Kumba, who seemed to adhere to the teaching of Christianity, indicated that there were some suspicious attitudes against Christianity. He addressed the Lamido Kumba compelling him to retract with these words: “you behave like a kid and betrayer of our ancestors. We want a man be our King. If you want to be our king you should give up your new ideology.”<sup>102</sup> In our understanding, the Lamido as a guardian of tradition should be uprights and attach to traditional religion. This admonishment from traditional rulers to instruct the Lamido should be understood more as a

---

<sup>101</sup> Informant F. Interview realized in Mbé, 21.07.11.

<sup>102</sup> Informant E. Interview realized in Stavanger, 28.03.11.

cry of traditional religious practitioners in a trouble. The flexibility of the Lamido could bring sort of a disaster to the spiritual life of his subjects. Otherwise adherents of traditional religion were worried about the abolishment of the traditional religion by both the present and future generation as they were enrolled by Christianity. Later, it appeared that few Dii continued to practice the traditional religion even if they continued to practice the cultural features of some rites such as the rite of marriage and circumcision. As we have presented before, the Dii people kept these rites as a central part of their cultural patrimony which constitute a strong insight of their identity.

The growth of Christianity raised also some contrasts in the life of many Christians and church workers. Among the Dii Christians there were those who left the church because their way of life did not obey the ethic code of the church. After they quitted Christianity for another religion they stood against Christianity. One of these mix-ups was found through the life of Belmont Dourmani who was one of the former students of the mission school. After his study at the mission school he served as one of the first teachers of the mission school of Tagboum in 1939. He left the church when one of the church leaders stigmatized polygamy during a public preaching of the church. He was frustrated because he was polygamous. Similar conflicts were also mentioned in Aggée's study in relation to the Basel Mission in Cameroon when he stated that the Bamoun people of Cameroon left Christianity and embraced Islam because of the stigmatization of polygamy.<sup>103</sup> The danger of this attitude was pointed out by Joseph Conrad Wold who claims that "this group of rejected polygamists will form a social backwater, a reservoir in which the old religious sacrifices and fears will continue to breed, a pocket of resistance to the Gospel. These pockets are particularly susceptible to conversion to Islam."<sup>104</sup> Back to Belmont Dourmani, he embraced Islam and he left the church because he was disappointed by the stigmatization of polygamy. Later he was elected member of the National assembly of Cameroon and became a detractor of Christianity in the Dii land. He used his position and even the weaknesses of the church to attract many people to Islam. He promised to young people "earth and heaven" if they become Muslim. He proposed to hire young people for good jobs if they converted to Islam and many of them did so since they were jobless and eager to look for good income and well-being. The mission school gave them education but hired just few of them with low salaries and many left jobless. One of our informants says that, when the pupils realized that "the church promised

---

<sup>103</sup> Aggée, *Sociétés et ritualités religieuses au Cameroun sous domination Française*, 154.

<sup>104</sup> Wold, Joseph Conrad, *God's Impatience in Liberia*, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968, 180.

more heaven than well-being on earth” to its followers, they left the church institutions to find good jobs in the state institutions. Also some of those who were not comfortable with their job in the church institutions left. Even so they were not obliged to convert to Islam following the voice of their mentor Belmont Dourmani; they were free to keep their Christian faith unless they looked for the highest position.<sup>105</sup>

Further more, numbers of church workers left their job in the church institutions and converted to Islam for their own comfort. André Siroma stated that on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1958 he ended the contract with the mission school employers and was recruited as the public school teacher. As we mentioned before he worked as teacher in the Bible School of Ngaoundéré and director of the important mission school of Mbé in 1946, Karna Manga in 1947, Ngaouyanga 1950, Ngaoundéré in 1954 and Ngangassaou from 1955 to 1958. He asserted that in this period of time one had to become Muslim to get a good position in the public service of the State. So after his recruitment as a public school master on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1959 he was converted to Islam on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1966. He claims that he had a luxurious life, honours and great success in his professional career. Still he acknowledged that he had done this to please himself and the human being, but not God. His conversion and re-conversion to Christianity, after his retirement from a loyal service of the state of Cameroon, illustrate how troublesome the spiritual crisis among the Dii people was. His case was not the only example in the life of the church; there were also other cases throughout the Dii land. He was welcomed by the church as proselyte on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1983.<sup>106</sup> This story reminds us of the Bible parable about “The Lost Son” in the gospel of Luke 15, 11-32.<sup>107</sup> One of our informants, completing the story of André Siroma, says that all his wives, sons and grand sons were baptized on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2001. In some respect, unlike the protagonist of polygamy, the church always welcomes proselyte with their entire family regardless their matrimony but cannot allow his members to become polygamous. Later one of his wives named Elisa Haoua served as deacon in the church while André Siroma himself led the “Mbum Choir” to keep alive the fire of his faith through the language in which he was initiated into the Christian faith, the language that Norwegian missionaries used to introduce Christianity in the Dii land.<sup>108</sup> In our understanding, the conversion of all the family shows that emergence of Christianity has reached out in the Dii land basically on the basis of kinship. When the man converted to Christianity the rest of

---

<sup>105</sup> Informant F. Interview realised in Mbé, 21.07.11.

<sup>106</sup> Siroma, *Temoignage sur ma deuxième vocation*, 4-5.

<sup>107</sup> *The Holy Bible*, 817.

<sup>108</sup> Informant D. Interview realised in Molde, 04.01.11.

the family do so and if he denied the faith his decision affected all his relatives. This supposes that since the Dii society has a parochial characteristic, the husband assumes a civil and spiritual responsibility and makes the spiritual choice convey for the entire family, woman and kids.

The crisis that disturbed the emergence of Christianity among the Dii had a strong impact on the life of so many people as mentioned, but it has also affected vocational recruitment in terms of a lack of new candidates for church ministry.

#### *3.4.3 The Crisis of Vocation among the Dii People*

After the contact with missionaries it was certain that the Dii land had a number of church workers but also more educated people converted to Christianity. As discussed before, by establishing mission schools, missionaries were looking for clerics to send in the mission field for evangelization not clerks for the administration of the state. But even if missionaries were worried about the introduction of more secular disciplines in mission schools to avoid the brain drain towards the public service, this policy could not last any longer. The change of educational policy introduced by the state entailed the transformation of the missionary educational system.

In fact, in 1954 the government of the state of Cameroon felt important to extend primary public schools throughout the state. In accordance with this policy, the first primary public school was established also in Mbé. It is noticeable that initially there was an existing agreement that prevented the state to establish public schools where there were mission schools. With the change of the educational policy adopted by the state this agreement of non-competition between the state and mission societies was set aside. The period that followed these transformations was looked as the era of enlightenment in the Dii land according to one of our informants. The Dii people had an opportunity to send their kids to the public schools or to mission schools. The number of the Dii pupils attending the mission school decreased drastically and those of the public school increased accordingly.

Moreover, through the change of the educational policy the state recommended also to missionaries the change of their old fashion in accordance with the general rule of the state. Missionaries should recruit well trained teachers and follow the official curriculum of the public school of the state. Thus, mission schools should train pupils to be able to labour not only for the missionary aims but be useful for the administration of the state. Consequently, as

also the missionaries changed also the curriculum of study according to the pressure of the state, the number of pupils interested in the mission work decreased. In 1954, after the establishment of the public primary school in Mbé, missionaries did not have the absolute control on the educational institutions in the Dii land as before. Likewise, they could not avoid the secular emancipation of their pupils by guiding their vocation only as professional church workers. Pupils were attracted by many opportunities that the state offered to them through secular teaching and secular professional activities. The Dii pupils understood that they could have better professional occupations a part from the mission work. They understood also that they could keep their Christian faith even if they worked in the public service of the state. Through this the state opened many opportunities for young people to take part in the social and political life by working as clerks, soldiers, nurses, civil servants, lawyers or teachers in the administration of the state. Little by little young people were attracted more by the state administration than church institutions.

One of the features, that attracted our attention in analyzing the emergence of national clerics in the Dii land, was that almost all Dii pioneer clerics started their career between 1936 and 1951 as church workers. Later apart from those church workers who were ordained pastors between 1961 and 1966, it seemed that the Dii Christianity had reached its apogee. This apogee encompassed the hypothesis that it was convenient to call the crisis of vocation for church ministry among the Dii people. In our understanding two interpretations were important to explain the meagre record of newcomers into the ministry of the church within the years 1954 to 1966. As we indicated before, the first interpretation was related to the establishment of the school by the state in the Dii land in 1954 and this drew the attention of pupils for new professional ventures. The second shift was connected to the life of the church itself. In fact, from the year 1960 to 1965 the NMS and SM have been working for joint mission that included some details about the training and the use of church workers from both sides. Despite the divergence of their origin they have the same objective to empower the mission work.<sup>109</sup> The restructuring of the church was on the way and church leaders were fixing details for cooperation within the church institutions. The interpretation of our survey shows that the number of Dii clerics was stable from 1966 until 1974. So, at the end of year 1974 the church numbered thirteen<sup>110</sup> Dii pastors ministering for the outreach of the ELCC and thirty five pastors from the different other tribes that constituted the ELCC. By studying

---

<sup>109</sup> Eldridge, Mohamadou, *Les archives missionnaires du Cameroun de Stavanger (Norvège)* : Catalogue préliminaire Français-Norvégien, Ngaoundéré : Anthropos, 1996, 30.

<sup>110</sup> Appendix C



the statistic of Dii clerics between the years 1966 and 1974 few Dii were recruited as clergy men in such a degree that it was relevant to speak of a crisis threatening the vocation for church ministry at least for some years.

The ministry exerted by the Dii church workers was seen with different glasses in the development of the history of the ELCC. In accordance to this the characterization of their ministry will enable us to complete the nature of their assessment in the outreach of the church.

#### *3.4.4 The Campaign towards the South of the Dii Land*

Many Dii ministers have taken part in the mission work not only inside the Dii land but they have also done it outside this area. The Dii campaign beyond the Dii land was a good experience of mission work.

The campaign of the Dii church workers towards the south can be divided into two parts. The former part deals with a territory which was entirely part of the Dii land, the latter relates to non-Dii areas. The southern Dii territory was this part of the Dii land included in the so-called Ecclesiastical District of Ngaoundéré. To great extent, this area was impeded by Islam because of the massive conversion of the Mbum people who were massively Muslim. Through intensive missionary activities of Dii church workers, Christianity found its voice in this part of the Dii land. With the involvement of national Dii church workers the missionaries succeeded in establishing mission schools in many villages and where there were mission schools there were also churches. At the end of year 1974 this district numbered the following four mission schools Nyassar-Homé, Nom-Kandi, Baoussi and Gangassaou. Moreover one saw also an increased presence of Dii church workers in villages like Yenoua and Nganha. David Saboulou for example served as evangelist in Yenoua from 1946 to 1950 and from 1950 to 1956 when he settled in Nganha, while Gabriel Mvodji was working as catechist-teacher in Baoussi. Paul Mbarbella worked in Nganha as catechist from 1948 to 1950. And Etienne Bobbo was pastor in Nganha from 1956 to 1959, in Nom-Kandi from 1959 to 1963 and in Ngaoundéré from 1964 to 1973. Paul Hamadjida was sent as pastor in Nom-Kandi in 1968. For Paul Abanda, he worked as catechist-teacher in Nganha from 1954 to 1956, in Mbéré Langa from 1956 to 1958, in Homé from 1958 to 1961. And just after his ordination he ministered as pastor in Nom-Kandi from 1966 to 1968. In this race of Dii mission work in this part of the Dii land we have to mention also André Siroma who was teacher assistant in the Bible School of Ngaoundéré in 1945 to 1946, director of the mission school of Ngaoundéré

from 1954 to 1955 and director of the mission school of Gangassaou from 1955 to 1958.<sup>111</sup> If there was a stronger presence of western missionaries in the district of Mbé, in this part of the mission field the work have been done mainly by Dii church workers.

After this look of the situation inside the Dii land, we will now focus on what has been done by the Dii church workers out of the Dii territories. The pathway of Nathanaël Bello was one of the cases of the Dii ministry beyond Dii land. Nathanaël Bello was born in Tagboum around 1939 and as his peers he became Christian when he was a pupil at the mission school of Ngaouyanga. His testimony confirms that most conversions in the Dii were connected to education. Such academic conversions come in support of John V. Taylor assertion that “the advance of the Christian Church in tropical Africa has depended more upon her virtual monopoly of western education than upon any other factor.”<sup>112</sup> So, this former pupil from the mission school was active in the life of the church of his native village among young people. This assessment gave him an opportunity for a church ministry career. In 1964 his community recommended him to the Bible School of Meng because of his gift for youth ministry. After the training he was sent as catechist in Bankim village and some years later he settled in Tibati. He had to learn Baya language to be understood among the Baya people. After a long stay in the Baya Land he was looking forward to return home to Mbé but the church never allowed him to do so until he was retired. The Christian community of Tibati hired him for all the life of his ministry. He never went back home for ministering until he was retired. He stated himself “I worked as missionary like my colleague another Dii minister until my retirement. I am happy that I served the Lord among other tribes.”<sup>113</sup> This statement confirmed the settlement of the Dii church workers among people of other tribes and there were so many similar examples in the life of the church.

Part of this missionary insight was shown through the life of Gabriel Mvodji. He was one example of itinerant workers in the series of Dii church workers participating in the growth of the ELCC. He was born in 1928 in Wack and was baptized in 1949. He embraced the Christian faith at school as most of his classmates. He was impressed by the missionary work for the wellbeing of the people through education, health care, pastoral care and liberation of his people from the slavery of their Fulani masters. He attended the mission school of Wack until 1949, the Bible School of Ngaouyanga from 1949 to 1950, the preparatory class for

---

<sup>111</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 331-333.

<sup>112</sup> John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, Philadelphia: Fortress Pree, 1963, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Informant C. Interview realized in Tibati, 31. 07.11.

theology in Ngaoundéré in 1960 and the School of Theology of Meiganga from 1961 to 1966. He was speaking his mother tongue the Dii language and many other languages like Mbum, Fulani and French. The use of these languages allowed him to minister not only inside the Dii land but also around in the Adamaoua region among other people from different tribes. He started his pastoral trip in Banyo in 1966 where he replaced another Dii pastor, Pierre Bangawa, in this community. He settled in a cosmopolitan area among Fulani, Hausa, Kwandja, Tikar, Mambila, Bamoun, Bulu, Bassa, Bafia and Douala peoples. One of his observers acknowledged that when Gabriel Mvodji arrived in Banyo the community numbered just around hundred Christians but when he left in 1975 there were about more than six hundred church members. He is definitely one of the Dii pastors whose influence crossed the borders of his people. He worked all his life to develop the church more in the other tribes than his own. When he left his native village Wack in 1950 for the Mission of God he never came back for longer periods until he died. He got sick when he was an active pastor in Ngaoundéré station church after baptizing 150 persons at Easter on April 1993.<sup>114</sup>

The mission work among the Dii people and towards other people took a holistic approach of mission through the proclamation of the gospel, the founding of local churches the meeting of human needs related to general well-being. The Dii mission work was crossing all kinds of racial, social and cultural frontiers. The Dii church workers' passion for education and skills for evangelization transformed the Dii land into one of the strongholds of mission work in the Northern part of Cameroon.

---

<sup>114</sup> *Http://www.dacb.org/stories. Internet; accessed, 26 May 2011.*

## **Chapter Four**

### **THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE DII CHRISTIANITY IN-DEPTH**

Our more detailed study of the Dii ministry in the following is about controversies occurring in the life of the church. It includes also the way that other people judged or regarded the emergence of Dii Christianity.

#### **4.1 The interpretation of the Dii ministry**

The encounter of the Dii people with Christianity on the one hand and their encounter with the other people on the other produced an intercultural and religious outcome. In addition these encounters made a slow drawl that pictured the Dii people as the church workers were emerging. The Dii church workers were characterized as pillars, partners and even challengers in the outreach of the church.

##### *4.1.1 The Dii People as Pillars in Church Mission*

The role of the Dii people as pillars of the mission work laid the ground for a positive view of Christianity among the people among whom they worked. This evaluation of the Dii ministry towards their brethren inside and outside the Dii territories shows that the Dii ministers were looked upon like farmers who sow the seed in the field. Using this metaphor, points to the gospel as the seed and the Dii church workers as sowers. The Dii land an area which provided a considerable number of national church workers for the NMS mission fields' also as pioneers participating in the work for the establishment of the ELCC. Apart from the settlement of a few national church workers from southern Cameroon who sojourned in the Dii land for a short time from 1933 to 1939 other national church workers had rarely worked in the Dii land. Still non-Dii church workers were always welcomed into the church institutions planted in the Dii land as teachers of mission schools and nurses in the hospitals established in Mbé and Tagboum, and in the leprosy hospital in Fubarka. This restriction should not be interpreted as a negative attitude towards non-Dii people, but should be understood in such a way that the Dii people were more prepared to exert as missionary than other people. In accordance with this, the increasing number of church workers recruited in the Dii land contributed to supply the other mission fields with the evangelistic human resources in terms of evangelists, teachers and ministers. The opportunity that the Dii ministers had in initiating missionary activities for the outreach of Christianity increased the

reputation outside the Dii land. The Dii church workers brought their know-how in ministering as far as possible to the remote areas. Proud of the missionary activities done by their peers, one of our informants claims that “the Dii land was the breast feeder for the Church.”<sup>115</sup>

The Dii people did not only render their contributions on Norwegian mission field but were also a pillar for the ELCC in general as catechists, evangelists, pastors, teachers and nurses. So many Dii people had been catechists, evangelists, pastors, teachers and nurses. The Dii Christians were working almost every part of Northern Cameroon among Tikar, Doayo, Mbum, and Fulani beyond the Dii land with the sustainable support of Norwegian missionaries. The Dii church workers were known by their dynamism not only in the narrow sense of mission work but also in the wider sense of the Christian mission such as teachers, nurses, civil servants, soldiers as witnesses in the public evangelizing by their behaviour. In this way the Dii people contributed directly and indirectly to the development of the Christian faith inside and outside the church institutions. Most of the Dii workers in both church and the state institution in the Adamaoua region were people who had earlier taken education in the mission schools implanted in their land. Since the situation of the traditional religion and also Islam was instable, Christianity attracted young Dii people of any religious background through its offering of a new way of life. One of our informants states that when he arrived in Mbé “many kids both Muslims and Pagans were pupils in the mission school. Many of them took Catechism class and were baptized.”<sup>116</sup> Still, it appeared that the Fulani and Mbum people reluctant in sending their children to the mission schools because they were against missionary activities. But after some time they began to show their interest in education when finding that their former slaves obtained positions in the public administration. Later on, the last groups of traditional believers, the Fulani and other people converted to Islam who were worried about their religious identity understood that education is a main factor of development, especially after the public schools of the state had been opened in many areas. They understood that education opened to public careers. In the case of Mbé, for example, since the mission school was operated in 1934, the public school was established in 1954 and most of the population appreciated the value of both secular education and mission schools. Our informant asserted that the current age-group of Dii people, between 50-60 years old, had learnt to speak and write the French language through the mission work.

---

<sup>115</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 25.07.11.

<sup>116</sup> Informant D. Interview realized in Molde, 04.01.11.

The importance of Dii church workers is illustratively expressed in a statement by the same informant: “if the missionaries did not cooperated with the Dii people the mission work would fail.”<sup>117</sup> The Dii people kindly accepted to cooperate with Norwegian missionaries and abandoned some cultural tradition for the sake of development of the mission work. The Dii people were in fact the first inner missionaries evangelizing among their own people and in other places of the Norwegian mission fields in Cameroon. One of our informants points to the already mentioned Paul Mbarbella as the first Dii catechist who settled among Mbum people in Nganha in 1948. In this way a dream of the Norwegian missionaries was realized since they were looking for allies to follow the mission work among the Mbum people. Beside him other Dii catechists were involved in the same mission field and elsewhere. The Dii evangelistic activities were also launched toward the Baya, Doayo, Tikar, Mambila, Mbum and Fulani peoples. Nathanaël Bello for example was sent in Tibati among Mbum and Gbaya ethnic groups; Paul Hamadjida in Beka within Gbaya tribe; Nanaoua in Yoko among Mambila and Kwandja ethnic groups; Yadji in Galim among the Yem-yem and Nizaa ethnic groups; Emmanuel Ousmanou in Gadjiwan among the Péré and Doayo tribes; Gabriel Mvodji in Banyo among the Fulani, Tikar and Bamoun inhabitants; Joël Maman in Nyambaka and Bebel where were living Fulani, Mbum and Gbaya people all together. According to our survey it seemed that the zeal of the Dii church workers was rooted the discovery of the new faith and the eagerness of their mentors who were also engaged for this evangelistic mission. The Dii church workers found it exciting to bring the gospel on to others and they were proud to participate in this task.

In our understanding these experiences strengthened the relationship between the Dii church workers and other people in general. The Dii church workers appreciated the value of Christianity established among their fellow brethren. They expected that such interrelationship could set up a strong relationship between Christians from different tribes for the mission work. Even so, people also understand the implementation of the Dii ministry as a development of sort of partnership between them and the NMS missionaries.

#### *4.1.2 The Dii Church Workers as Partners in Mission*

When we go through the story of the growth of the mission work as described above we could say that the Dii church workers were also partners in the in the outreach of Christianity. In succeeding to make disciples among the Dii pupils, Norwegian missionaries trained relevant

---

<sup>117</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 25.07.11.

partners for mission both in the Dii land and in the church at large since missionary activities in the field were carried out also by these partners. If initially Dii church workers were playing the second role beside the Norwegian missionaries mostly as interpreters they more and more, as years went by, stood up for mission and spread the gospel. The emergence of the Dii church workers in cooperation with Norwegian missionaries changed the nature of their relationship such into a relation of partnership instead of assistance. This network was important in strengthening the mission work in the ELCC for many years. The growth of the church in the Adamaoua area was supported practically by the Dii church workers through many efforts and tasks. Also, the Dii church workers were not only cooperating in the mission fields but they were also appointed as responsible in guiding the direction of different church institutions. The Dii church workers who were lifted to the higher responsibility as managers of church institutions were developing this partnership both with NMS and the SM missionaries within the ELCC. A considerable number of the Dii church workers used the opportunities to bring sustainable contributions for the church growth through these institutions. From our survey Luc Adamou and Gaston Dadi were the most influential personalities in this context we will there focus on them in the following.

One of the Dii leaders among other church workers who attracted one's attention is Luc Adamou. He was born in 1946 in Mbé during the first decade of the missionary era in the Dii land. He made his first step in education in 1951 when he entered the Mission School of Tagboum led by Thomas Maïdawa, and formerly catechist-teacher in this village. In 1952 Luc Adamou left Tagboum with two of his classmates named Jean Yaya and André Yaya, and fulfilled their study in the Mission School of Ngaounyanga in 1955. Then he continued his academic career into the Mission School of Galim where he obtained his First Living Certificate School (CEPE) in 1957. In 1958 he succeeded to the Common Entrance in the Protestant College in Ngaoundéré where he met other Dii classmates, such as Pierre Laouan and Martin Dadjé. They followed the study in the same class until the third grade, the highest newly created class of this college, and they were sent as teachers to different mission schools in the Dii land: Pierre Laouan to Toubaka, André Yaya to Mbé, Jean Yaya was sent in Sassa Mberssi, and Luc Adamou himself to Nyadou. However, in 1963 he was admitted in the fourth grade after repeating the third grade for one year in order to learn and take an exam in the German language exam. The same year he was awarded the Secondary First Certificate (BEPC). After this diploma he was admitted into the teaching training school where he stayed until 1965 and was sent as teacher in the Mission School of Galim. Later he took other

professional trainings in the National High School (ENS) of Yaoundé from 1968 to 1970 and in the National High School (ENS) of Saint-Etienne in France from 1972 to 1974.

As we see it Luc Adamou was one of the partners of the ELCC organization who at an early stage housed the vision of mission work in the church educational institutions. In accordance with this he states that, he has chosen to be teacher because he knew that everything required education. He believed that through education he could contribute to the development of his people in helping them to improve their social, political and spiritual life. As a consequence, when the crisis hits the church and people of his intellectual standard left the mission for the public service of the state, he did not give up the mission work. He resisted the temptation to join the public service entrusting in the goal of missionary activities for the wellbeing of the Dii people and others. In fact, when the western missionaries passed over the responsibility to the national elites of the ELCC organization, he was selected to implement the church mission educational policy throughout the country. In 1965 Luc Adamou has been appointed to a higher responsibility in the department of education which was one of the biggest church institutions. He invested his life time in promoting education, training and recruiting teachers for mission schools. He was a member of the executive board of the ELCC, i.e the Central Administration, and cooperated with three former presidents of the ELCC organization. He worked in partnership with Paul Darman for twelve years during his two mandates from 1962 to 1965 and from 1977 to 1985. He also worked with Pierre Songsaré Amtsé for twelve years during his mandate which had been extended from 1985 to 1997. And finally he cooperated with Philémon Barya for two years from 1997 to 1999. He also held a position as coordinator of the Diaconal department of ELCC and General Secretary of the ELCC, and he was the National Secretary of Protestant Education for the Grand North, East and Centre of the state of Cameroon. He also travelled as representative of the ELCC in many international meetings of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Norway, France, Kenya and West Africa.<sup>118</sup> His assessment in the mission work strengthened the partnership between the ELCC and its western partner mission organizations such as SM and NMS. These pioneer mission associations had agreed in establishing the ELCCRCA, supervised by the NMS missionary Halfdan Endresen who was elected first president in 1960.<sup>119</sup>

Luc Adamou was one of the pioneers who dealt with transmission of knowledge to young Cameroonians in general and he was the one who lifted up the picture of partnership between

---

<sup>118</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré, 25.07.11.

<sup>119</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 161.



mission organizations. He was eager of a holistic mission approach and fascinated by the model employed by the western missionaries. He had not only supported the missionary activity in participating in the church institution but also individually oriented efforts that aimed to promote the emergence of Dii intellectual elites. People named his own house “dormitory” because it always hosted many pupils during the academic year. He was inspired by the picture of the boarding room and built a private house in Yaoundé where many young Dii students at the University of Yaoundé were living free of charge for many years in pursuing their study. He realized how painful and expensive the student life far from home for the majority of Dii students from poor families was. This building served as the first station of the ELCC in Yaoundé since also the first workers in charge of building the church in Yaoundé were living there. The ELCC organization had benefited from his experience as partner and the Dii people were proud of his generosity alongside his missionary work. He worked for 41 years in the ELCC institution and retired in 2006.

Another important partner of the mission work was Gaston Dadi who was born in 1930 in Sassa-Mberssi. He was thirteen years old when a first catechist-teacher settled in his village in 1943. He became teacher in the mission schools of Ngaouyanga from 1951 to 1952 and of Mbé from 1952 to 1961. From 1961 to 1962 he prepared the entrance examination in the School of Theology of Meiganga, where he made his studies in theology from 1962 to 1966. His class had also other Dii students such as Joël Maman, Paul Abanda, Matthieu Kadia and Gabriel Mvodji. At the end of his study in Meiganga he was sent as teacher in the Bible School of Meng where he practised from 1966 to 1973 in training catechists and evangelists. From there he was admitted to fulfil his study in theology in the School of Theology in Ndoungué in 1975. This training gave him the opportunity to be nominated as teacher in the School of Theology in Meiganga where he later became director from 1975 to 1980, the date of his death.

Gaston Dadi was basically engaged in evangelistic educational institution. He used his life time in sharing his knowledge in teaching both in the bible schools and school of theology. He was the first national clerics whom the ELCC organization entrusted the responsibility as director to manage bible and theological education. He grasped this opportunity in training national church leaders for the establishment of local churches that constituted the ELCC. In 1977 he projected to become president of the ELCC organization following the mandate of Joseph Medoukan who led the ELCC organization from 1965 to 1977. As reminder Joseph

Medoukan had replaced Paul Darman who was president from 1962 to 1965; the first president being a Norwegian missionary Halfdan Endresen who was president from 1960 to 1962 of the ELCC organization newly established. However, in 1977 Gaston Dadi hoped to be elected with the support of Gbaya people. He cooperated with Paul Darman who mobilized Gbaya delegates for this electoral synod in Beka. Tensions that rose on the financial contribution for the support in relation to the Central Administration of the ELCC, had compromised the project of Gaston Dadi. The dream of Gaston Dadi was voted down. In fact, according to the rules of the constitution the delegate were allowed to vote if they had contributed financially to the Central Administration of the ELCC organization. But the Gbaya delegates who had not contributed enough for the central Administration of the ELCC were consequently refused the right to vote by the synod in accordance with the statement of the Constitution of the ELCC. Thus Paul Darman appealed to the Gbaya delegates to boycott the synod claiming that they were neglected because they were poor people such that poor had no place in the church. The synod was obliged to review this disposition contested by the Gbaya delegates who took part to the synod. After the agreement made between other delegates of the synod, Gbaya delegates decided to present Paul Darman as candidate to this presidential election. The result was that Paul Darman became the president of the ELCC.<sup>120</sup> This synod had generated the resurgence of the first biggest tribal clash for leadership in the history of ELCC. After the solution Gaston Dadi wisely avoided to the ELCC this quarrel for leadership on the basis of tribal belonging in keeping his priority to the evangelistic mission.

The partnership developing by the Dii church workers enabled them to involve in the mission with good will, and this was also very challenging.

#### *4.1.3 The Dii Church Workers as Challenger in Mission*

The Dii missionary activities seemed all in all to be very challenging. The analysis of the pathway of the Dii church workers raises one of the painful aspects in the life of the national Dii missionaries both inside and outside their areas. As we have seen above, for a decade, the majority of church workers in the Norwegian mission fields came from the Dii tribe. This notice is confirmed by Kåre Lode when he says that the Dii were furnishing enough workers for expanding the work from the three basic districts which were Ngaoundéré, Tibati and Mbé towards the other mission fields such as Tignère, Galim and Banyo.<sup>121</sup> Since the activities of the Dii workers challenged the faith of the people who hosted them, the reaction they

---

<sup>120</sup> *Http://www.dacb.org/stories*. Internet; accessed, 26 May 2011.

<sup>121</sup> *Lode, Appelés à la Liberté*, 104.

experienced was a both positive and negative nature.

In a positive way the Dii church workers succeeded in implanting churches and converting people from other tribes to Christianity. This experience left a positive mark and it was a time of victorious mission work both within the border of the Dii land and among people of other tribes. In the Dii land, the chiefs of villages asked for more investment from the mission work in terms of instance of the presence of catechists to enlighten the life of the village. The presence of a catechist raised the reputation of the village as an emerging village compared to those which had without a catechist to initiate school and to take on tasks of cooperating with the illiterate chiefs to communicate with the colonial administration. Later the venture of these emerged church workers raised tensions grounded in social matters.

The Dii missionary efforts were also challenged both by general context and by the authorities these workers met. This can be illustrated by examples both from the Dii land and from beyond the Dii territory. In the Dii land, where the chief of the village did not belong to the Dii tribe the Dii church workers were often not welcomed, such as by the Lamido of Rey who was worried about his throne. He resisted all initiatives that contributed to the development of the Dii people whom he considered as his slaves for ever. Because of that, he expelled the Dii mission workers from the Chiefdom of Rey as indicated before. So he delayed the mission work for a long time by accepting the diaconal mission but not the evangelistic aspect.

Another confrontation came as Dii church workers were acting in different mission fields among the other tribes. If after a decade or so, the Dii missionary activities contributed to the emergence of education in the Dii land, their activities affected also other national church workers outside the Dii land. This growth had been the wish of both western and national missionaries during their efforts in the mission fields. But this situation generated tensions in the relation between the Dii mission workers and national workers from other tribes in various mission fields. The Dii church workers, who were welcomed at the beginning, were gradually looked upon by other eyes by the nationals in these areas who hosted them earlier. As the number of educated people in these mission fields emerged they pointed at the Dii missionaries like intruders. They claimed that they had now the same training but without real freedom since the Dii missionaries managed the work. They maintained that they were able to work on their own without the support of the Dii missionaries. This riposte brought trouble into the cooperation between “the imperialist Dii church workers” and some of the other tribes hosting the mission work. Some people regarded the Dii church workers as invaders of

the workplace. These clashes between the Dii missionaries on the one hand and traditional rulers on one hand and national church workers from non-Dii territories on the other hand show the ambivalence of the ministry of Dii church workers in the mission field both inside their own land and beyond.

In front of such attitudes the Dii missionaries were obliged to go back home since they were seen as invaders of the workplace by their brethren. Still this situation remains challenging in both sides in keeping the mission work alive that constituted the core of the of the Dii ministry nowadays.

#### **4.2 The core of the contemporary Dii ministry**

The core of Dii ministry in the actual era faced many challenges. Some of these challenges are related to the development of the church mission itself while others are connected to the social life.

##### *4.2.1 The Kinship Challenge*

The global mission work in the Dii land was developed in the context of internal kinship from the beginning of the mission work in the context. When one refers to the establishment of ELCC we found that the settlement of western missionaries was grounded also in this perspective. The first core of the Dii Christianity was placed in the context of multiethnic arena since the pattern of mission work that enabled the growth of Christianity in the Dii land was connected also to the ethnic identity. One can say that the kinship was a counter factor to the geographical aspect of the mission work developing in the Dii land and also in other areas where the mission work was performed. The kinship had strengthened Christian faith among the Dii people. But the Dii people had all the time been in contact with people from different ethnic groups. They looked at social relationship prior element of the community life with other people amongst whom they lived and shared with joy their everyday life with foreigners in respect of their faiths. In the same was missionaries were welcomed by the Dii people, other people were also welcomed in the Dii land since before the arrival of missionaries. This basic and open attitude to others predisposed the Dii people to intermingle with other people, Christians and non-Christians. The intern kinship had never been an obstacle for the spring of the church mission on the Dii land. On the contrary the ethnic bias had strengthened the missionary activities of the Dii people. According to this, for the emergence of Christianity, the Dii ministers were speaking both Dii and Mbum languages, and acted as translators for missionaries whose language skills were restricted to Mbum or Norwegian. On the basis of

kinship relations Dii church workers and their mentors have contributed to prolific missionary activities in the establishment of the ELCC. The transcendence of geographical borders and ethnic basis shaped the NMS and SM joint mission work in establishing the ELCC.

The Dii Christians' openness towards other members of the Dii society should be emphasized; there is more need to pay attention to the interethnic relationship when many people from different cultures share the same area. For Dii people workers and their Christianity cannot find its voice in proclaiming exclusion but always encompassed Christians together in all areas. In the past, the use of the Dii and Mbum languages was an intercultural opportunity for communication with a large number of people. This bilingual competence enabled the Dii ministers to go everywhere to preach the gospel from the north to the south of the Dii land and also beyond the Dii land. In present times the Dii land has become a mixed area with many migrants and the church trying to find the ways to involve them in the Christian community. The ways to do this consist in finding the attractive strategy to call them and to keep the fire of their faith burning. The aim is to enable them to keep their Christian faith active instead of passive attendance of Sunday worship. The main goal is to make those newcomers becoming active Christians in such a way as for them to become "fishers of men" for the church. Thus, the Dii church workers should perform a sort of trans-national missionary insight that brings them beyond their tribal border without going out the Dii land as they did earlier.

Besides this Dii ministers have realized that although there is little opposition against the use of the Dii language or other languages in the worship, there was also an ethnic identity concern in worshipping in the mother tongue. These remind us about the work of the Dii language pioneer, Thomas Maïdawa, who as already described above started the service in the Dii language despite strong opposition at the beginning. There is no that the use of Dii language allowed the Dii people to understand better the gospel and to keep also alive the identity of the tribe. In accordance with this James Currey asserts that "language carries culture, culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world."<sup>122</sup> Understanding the gospel in the mother tongue is so important that church leaders continued to manage more than one language view the composition of the Dii community and the nature of the service to content participants. This opportunity is used in such a way that ethnic groups could receive the

---

<sup>122</sup> John Mcleod, *Beginning of Postcolonialism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, 21.

gospel in the language they understand better. Thus, when church leaders find in places that where few non-Dii attend the worship a solution is to worship in the Dii language but the different elements of the service are to be translated in the language that these minorities understand better. But in services where non-Dii attendants are larger numbers the celebration can be split into two or three in correspondence with the language they understand better such as Dii, French and Fulani languages.

#### 4.2.2 *The Evangelistic Challenge*

In the Dii land pluralism of faith is realistic it is a main and general feature. Islam and Christianity emerged on the Dii land as the Dii people got in contact with other peoples and with the missionaries. The Dii people who were initially pagan got in touch with Islam through the Fulani people and they welcomed Christianity introduced by Western missionaries. The Dii land became a multi-religious arena where people acknowledge the religion of their choice. In the same household one can find members from different religions such as Protestant and Catholic and Islam. Thus the emergence of these faiths increased the need of inter-religious dialogue to contribute in keeping a sort of balance between believers from different faiths. The Dii ministry was to support with the evangelistic mission to implement the Christian in order to win new members. At the same time, one of the relevant challenges in the Dii context consisted in establishing a good relationship between Christian faiths and other ideologies. One aspect of this is the aim of Dii Christians to encourage the entire church in the Dii land to take part interfaith dialogue with other ecclesiastical denominations and non-Christian religions. One can say that one of the challenges lies in on the establishment of interfaith dialogue locally. But interfaith dialogue is a formative element of Christian mission and not a programme for the banishing of evangelistic mission of the church. Witnessing the Christian faith is a fundamental expression of the church.

In this context of multiple faiths, the life of people depend on interreligious communication based on dialogue becomes a crucial feature of common life in the society. So the relation between Christians from different denominations could strengthen Christian mission as joint efforts for the outreach of Christianity. In accordance with the agenda of the World Conference on Religion and peace which took place in 1970 at Kyoto in Japan,<sup>123</sup> interfaith dialogue is founded on the increasing need of cooperation among Christians for the outreach of the Christian faith. Among Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Adventists and Lutherans in the

---

<sup>123</sup> Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1978, 364.

Dii land evangelistic mission would in agreement with this principle consist in evangelism with the aim of converting people who are not Christian instead of evangelizing against each other denominations and in proselytism. The Dii Christians can in this way perform a dynamic exchange of experience beneficial for the implementation of Christianity in the Dii land. Such joint efforts can be a common basis for them to pursue dialogue with Muslim of the same area. According to this we agree with the root of interfaith dialogue developing by Thomas F. Best who states that “interfaith dialogue implies a reflexive process, bringing Christians together to think and do something about their own divisions before engaging in dialogue with partners of other faiths.”<sup>124</sup> In our understanding it could be one of the issues of improvement of the interreligious dialogue suitable for the Dii context of multiple faiths.

Besides the Christian interfaith in the narrow sense in the Dii land we can also say that interfaith dialogue in the wider sense can be one of the focuses of Dii Christian leaders and their followers. Since the former consists in doing common work among Christians across denomination borders, the latter involves the relationship between Christians and non-Christians in everyday life. Dii Christians in dialoguing with the people of other faiths practice a missionizing attitude in their daily life. In our survey it was noticeable that many people had accepted Christianity because of the evangelizing mission of the church. So the missionary interfaith dialogue is part of a Christian’s daily life with the vocation in which he or she lives and works. Norman E. Thomas seems to confirm this when he asserts that “there is no true church without a humble dialogue with non-Christians or without fellowship with them.”<sup>125</sup> The Dii land, which is an arena of many religions, is a place where interreligious enterprise by Dii Christians can promote peaceful life together within people who belong to different religions.

If Dii church leaders and their followers focus on ecumenical dialogues this can also be an opportunity for evangelistic activities. Still some Dii Christians and non-Christians doubt about the success of interreligious dialogue. They feel that the development of such interfaith dialogue raises a sort of suspicious incompatibility. They are worried about proselytism which is a predicable temptation that rises on both Christian and non-Christian sides. However, neglecting the missionary concern in the development of one interdenominational or

---

<sup>124</sup> Thomas F. Best, *Instrument of Unity: National Council of Churches within the One Ecumenical Movement*, WCC Publications, 1988, 144.

<sup>125</sup> Thomas E. Norman, *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity, American Society of Missiology Series* 20, New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1995, 91.

interreligious dialogue could lead to a sort syncretism without a concrete result of Christian transformation. Michael Kinamon is aware of this when he claims that “the particular risks of syncretism in the world should not lead Christians to refrain from the dialogue, but are additional reason for engaging in dialogue so that the issues may be clarified.”<sup>126</sup> Even if interfaith dialogue is controversial, Dii Christians could not omit the missionary pattern in the process of interreligious dialogue and Christian witnessing should not be confined to the direct preaching. In addition, interreligious dialogue among the Dii people may be connected to the fields of humanitarian and diaconal enterprises. Partners of the interfaith dialogue, the Dii Christians and other religious partners together may by virtue of their respective faiths cooperate in fighting for human rights, peace, justice and welfare. They may join the rest of the world in struggling against starvation, infant labour and violence towards women. The domain of interreligious cooperation is extremely wide and flexible for believers of any religions to participate in. Interfaith partnership between Dii Christians and non-Christians may be performed in solving social problems and in contributing to social development. For each religious group cataclysm and diseases can be focuses on as common enemies. They may build health centres for local people in partnership or separately according to their convenience. They may also put their interest together in building schools to promote the development of their land. On top of this social outlook of interfaith cooperation we can say that the Dii context of multiple religions could protect the respect of universal human values in such a way that one’s “dialogue partner is to be treated with respect and should be received with openness”<sup>127</sup> as someone created in the image of God. The Dii society regardless of religious belonging - Christian, Moslem, Animist or other - needs healing, education and wellbeing.

Still the Christian way to conduct this interfaith partnership is “a specific way to be in mission” and as a way to attract people to Christianity.

#### 4.2.3 *The Development Challenge*

The development of local churches in the Dii land remains the core of challenges in the life of the Dii ministry. As Dii church workers have always struggled for the expansion of the church a more recent goal is to focus on its development in its new form. The local church is facing a need for sustainable managerial, propagation and development strategies.

---

<sup>126</sup> Michael Kinamon and Briand E. Cope, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthropology of Key Text and Voices*, Geneva: WCC, 1997, 409-401.

<sup>127</sup> Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Witnessing to Christ Today, Edinburgh 2010 series vol.2*, Oxford: Regnum Book International, 2010, 37.



From our survey on the growth of the church in the Dii land we can sort out some aspects that call for renewal of the management policy for local churches. It appeared that some local churches in the Dii land were dying out. On the one hand the dying out of these churches were due to historical causes. In some places congregations had died earlier because of persecution. In other places they declined because of migration of inhabitants who left the village to settle in other places of the Dii land and the number of people remaining back not being sufficient for the support the church. The village of Karba-Kéroua which formerly housed one of the important congregations in the Dii land crumbled down because of migration. Others churches died because of inconstancy of their members who abandoned the Christian faith and adhered to another religion. So inconstancy of the Christian faith in local areas is a main challenge in the outreach of the church among the Dii people. These areas have in some cases also created a sort of hostile environment that prevented Christian faith to emerge. The village of Ndom and Ngaounyanga which were formerly housing first congregations in the Dii land numbered now more Muslims than Christians. In 1952, the mission school established in Ngaounyanga was moved to Mbé to keep the balance of the missionary activities. These regards are also focuses pointed out by scholars like Bob Jackson who states that:

Some churches have, of course died as a result of persecution. Others have gone into decline because of faithlessness. Others have found hard going in a hostile environment...growth is the normative condition for the national Church in normal times if it keeps up with culture.<sup>128</sup> (Bob 2003, 31)

This actualized the question of management of the local church after mission work. The risk of inconsistency of the local church mission in the Dii land after the plantation of congregations is a main motive to inspire the Dii church workers in keeping the Christian faith alive. It established that the living faith needs good management led by church leaders who are not only passive preachers but visionary leaders. For better management church workers are to be trained and motivated to bring existing local churches to more vital expression of Christian faith. Local mission will in this way be enabled to continue its outreach inside and outside the church in a dynamic way. The implementation of the mission work by the national church workers is not being limited to the oldest local churches with its old fashion ministry. In addition, the mission work of the existing congregations can generate new Christian communities or increase the number of Christians in the existing local churches. This means that the missionary enterprise is performed not only inside the church

---

<sup>128</sup> Jackson Bob, *Hope for the church: contemporary strategies for growth*, London: Church House Publishing, 2003, 31.

building but also outside this building by the member of the church. The fire of mission work keeps on burning in such a way that Christians are able to strengthen others and bring non-believers to Christianity. Christians receive the teaching of the church and they continue to transmit the Christian faith in such a way that local churches in the Dii land become a sort of “contagious church”<sup>129</sup> according to the statement of Mark Mittelberg. This fresh expression challenges one of our informants who stated that “one must rethink and refund the ecclesiastical management for more harmony. Nowadays Jesus is not the centre of interest in the mission work because private interests overwhelm the mind of church workers.”<sup>130</sup> Through this assertion he touched one of the cores of the challenge in the life of the church in the Dii land.

Beside this the development of the church in the Dii land was also another frame of mission work that should not be neglected. Minimizing the material and social aspect of the church increases the gap towards the holistic schemes of the mission of Christ through the church. As possible solution local churches could be involved in the development project that fits with the local area instead of enjoying just the life of the existing local churches. Both church workers and lay people are concerned by development initiatives and in doing so the local community could strengthen the mission work. The incomes generated locally enable the local churches just to pay for the salary of church leaders but is not enough to realize a stronger project that could socially press new adherence to entrust the mission work. In old congregations there is lack of innovations that can attract more people to adhere to Christianity. In contrast local church institutions as hospitals and mission schools have been closed down instead of developing more attractive and social mission. We could not overestimate the project that the local churches were operating as common farms and support the member owe to some vulnerable persons, widowers and orphans but local churches can do more to improve the traditional way of mission enterprise daily. This paradigm of mission work can enable the legitimacy of the theory of holistic mission of the church and the practice of local churches in mission.

---

<sup>129</sup> Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a contagious church: increasing your church's evangelistic temperature*, Michigan: Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2007, 17.

<sup>130</sup> Informant A. Interview realized in Ngaoundéré in 25.07.11.

## **Chapter Five**

### **CONCLUSION**

The study of the outreach of Christianity in the Northern Cameroon shows that Dii Christians were indeed associated with the growth of Christianity and with the establishment of ELCC. This development was, above all, the result of a strong relationship between western missionaries and national church workers. The arrival of Norwegian missionaries was the starting point for mission enterprise of the Dii people. They are considered as the earliest missionaries to take up work among the Dii people. Their actions were however supported by some national missionaries from southern Cameroon who had been converted to Christianity long time before by other foreign missionaries from different denominations. The missionaries especially used education to communicate the gospel. The conversion of the Dii people to Christianity soon proved to prepare them for taking part in the mission. When the gospel was preached to the Dii people by the pioneer missionaries they were soon eager to join in with their own efforts in the “home mission.” The Dii people were, in fact, involved in the mission work quite instantly. One uses to say that the Dii people have contributed efficiently already from the very beginning to spread the Gospel in their area. But, their missionary enterprise was not limited to the Dii motherland but is extended to other people outside the proper area of the Dii. In doing this ethnographic study on the development of the Dii Christianity from the Dii land and beyond other areas we have highlighted kinship as a powerful characteristic for the growth of Christian faith within the Dii tribe with a possible extension elsewhere. We have understood the success of Dii ministry in converting people to Christianity besides the western missionaries and their contribution in the process of the establishment of ELCC.

It is noticeable that the Dii people were opened to the Christian faith and the majority of them came to adopt the new faith. Many reasons explain this shift of the Dii people to Christianity. The starting point of the historical contact between the Dii people with the western missionaries took place in the context of a deep crisis in the Dii land and in which a relevant interpretation of the Christian faith played a important role. The western missionaries opened their work under hard struggle against political and religious pressures that threatened their relationship with the Fulani people in term of their oppressions under the umbrella of the

French colonial policy. The western missionaries struggled hard to free the Dii people from these oppressions and the gospel brought them a sort of sustainable social and spiritual security and freedom. The missionaries were a channel for social, cultural and spiritual spring of the Dii people. The Dii people looked at the missionaries as someone who brought peace through the gospel and they were considered freedom makers.

The missionaries used these opportunities to play an active role to establish the churches in the Dii land. In our study we have shown similarities between the missionary interpretations of the divine and the idea of deities in the traditional religion which convinced a majority of the Dii people about Christianity. It seems that the establishment of mission schools played a key role in the process of Christianization in the Dii land. Missionaries undertook education of the Dii people and step by step recruited the most educated Christians Dii pupils to spread the gospel. Most of the first converted Dii people were pupils of the primary mission schools. Although they had not received a formal training they were the pillar on whom missionaries found their hope for the pioneer mission work. In the very beginning they were used for the translation of western missionary preaching. They played also the role of teachers, catechists and evangelists except of pastors in the mission field. But those who were trained as catechists had cooperated in the evangelistic mission of the church and after some years many of them were trained as full time national ministers within the rank of clergy. They largely took part in the extension of the church by converting their brothers and sisters. Their contribution was a big help for the fast growth of the church in the Dii land and in the other areas.

Since the mission work in the Dii land and the conversion to Christianity was too much connected to the mission school, when these institutions had a problem of management and closed down due to many limitations, the development of the church was also heavily affected. The French colonial administration and the Fulani Lord inside the chiefdom of Ngaoundéré in the Southern Dii land decided to close down these mission schools in the Dii land. This policy affected the strategy of evangelization but did not stop the mission work in the chiefdom of Mbé, the centre of the Dii Christianity. In addition the hindrance to the extension of the church was found in the opposition of the Fulani further to the North East of Mbé in the Chiefdom of Rey. The Fulani lord of Rey prevented the establishment of mission schools in his kingdom and he had also persecuted Christians for political reasons. He considered the chiefdom of Mbé as a headquarter of Christianity and the mission venture of

the school teachers, catechists and evangelists lead by the Dii intellectuals were seen as an attack on. Moreover the visit of the Lamido of Mbé in his region threatened was similar to an aggression against his territory.

If the growth of the Dii minister was a blessing for the church the ELCC, the proceeding of the mission work in the Dii land gave birth to two different reactions. Some rejected them as the Lamido of Rey, but this attitude did not forbid missionary enterprises of Dii church workers among other people beyond the Dii land. The other Dii church workers were accepted as messengers of the new faith in many mission fields. They had the opportunity to sojourn for longer or shorter periods away from home in most of the Norwegian mission fields. In accordance with this some Dii church workers were hired for their entire career until they were retired, as in cases of Bello Nathanaël and Simon Kanou who worked in the region of Tibati until their retirement.

But the Dii church workers had to struggle a lot to keep the flame of their faith burning. After all, they had to struggle to come back to the use in the church of their mother tongue which had been replaced by the Mbum language. The initiative for this was taken by Thomas Maïdawa and was a decisive measure for the preservation of the Dii identity. Unlike the earlier policy of the church in using the Mbum language for all Christians stood out one of the pioneer local Church leaders who conducted his work in his mother tongue.

The national pioneers in general and the Dii church workers in particular had cooperated with the Norwegian missionaries to build and spread the activity of the ELCC. In 1960 when the NMS and SM had planned for fusion the Dii church workers had acted like a bridge and increased cooperation between people from different tribes in the development of the ELCC. The missionary enterprise of the Dii people brought them beyond the border of their areas, among different ethnic groups, with whom they had cooperated and they should now cooperate within the institution of ELCC. In the beginning of 1974 thirteen of altogether forty-eight ordained pastors in the ELCC were of the Dii origin.

Nowadays some relevant challenges broaden the missionary enterprise in the context of Dii land itself. In concluding my investigation on the Dii missionary enterprise it seems necessary to look at the intern kinship which stills the base of the transmission of faith in the Dii environment. The evangelistic enterprise of the existing local churches is also a relevant issue for the ongoing expansion of Christianity on new ground to prevent the decline of the

Christian faith threatened by other religious groups. Special attention should be given one more to afford the development challenge of the church in the Dii land the core of a substantial missionary enterprise through which the church witnesses the Christian faith.

We remain convinced that in the history of the church, the Dii share in the church work had been an important factor in the successful transfer of mission work into the national setting depending on mutual acceptance and adaptation. It is my hope that my study can render a contribution to the understanding of the role of Dii church workers in the outreach of Christianity and the establishment of ELCC. I also hope it can help to encourage a renewed discussion about the empowerment of the mission enterprise in the Dii land.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A

#### NORWEGIAN MISSIONARIES ON DII LAND 1934-1974<sup>131</sup>

	Name and Surname	Date of Birth	Arrival in Cameroon	Sojourn in Mbé	Occupation
1	Andersen Eline Helstad	02.07.1937	1969	1969-1973	Nurse
2	Bjoraa Aslaug	28.04.1924	1955	1968-1972	Teacher
3	Bjørn Solveig	06.03.1923	1951	1951-1956	Teacher
4	Botnen Inga	06.06.1919	1950	1950-1954	Nurse
5	Dankel Odd	05.05.1923	1951	1956-1960	Pastor
6	Dankel Kristine	18.04.1922	1951	1956-1960	Teacher
7	Flakk Ingrid	07.07.1911	1947	1947-1952	Teacher
8	Fløttum Sverre Ingerbrigt Olsen	01.10.1907	1934	1934-(1959) <sup>132</sup>	Pastor
9	Fløttum Anne Marie R.	10.07.1907	1934	1934-(1959)	
10	Gahnstrøm Gunnar	18.01.1921	1954	1966-1970	Deacon
11	Gahnstrom Signy	31.01.1920	1954	1966-1970	Nurse
12	Haarr Paul Gerhard	20.04.1928	1955	1955-1956	Pastor
13	Haarr Karen Ulland	21.07.1923	1949	1955-1958	Teacher
14	Heimstad Torbjørg J	01.04.1938	1965	1969-1970	Teacher
15	Hetlesæter Helga	08.11.1925	1955	1967-1970	Nurse
16	Knudsen Sigurd Ernst	03.06.1925	1954	1960-1963	Pastor
17	Knudsen Gudrun R.	16.02.1926	1954	1960-1963	
18	Kopperdal Aslaug	28.08.1924	1957	1963-1967	Nurse
19	Kwamme Petra	20.09.1928	1961	1961-1972	Teacher
20	Lode Lars	29.01.1940	1966	1966-1970	Pastor
21	Lofthus Martha	02.03.1917	1948	1948-1950	Nurse
22	Lofthus Njell	06.09.1932	1968	1968-1972	Agronomist
23	Lofthus Ingrid K.	02.01.1934	1968	1968-1972	
24	Mosand Ingeborg	26.09.1920	1950	1961-1964	Nurse
25	Sola Guri	26.08.1925	1957	1957-1961	Nurse
26	Strand Else	20.08.1928	1959	1959-1963	Teacher
27	Thrana Johannes	22.04.1894	1924	1933-(1955)	Pastor
28	Thrana Else Nielsen	29.03.1901	1927		
29	Toft Olav	05.06.1923	1951	1951-1955	Pastor
30	Toft Ragna Svela	28.04.1925	1951	1951-1955	Nurse
31	Tunheim Gerd	06.09.1934	1965	1965-1968	Teacher
32	Waala Henny	07.04.1923	1948	1955-1959	Teacher
33	Walle Jan Håve	22.12.1919	1951	1961-1965	Pastor
34	Walle Lilly Seland	18.06.1921	1951	1961-1965	

<sup>131</sup> Larsen, *Kamerun*, 134-142.

<sup>132</sup> The parenthesis indicates the end of the sojourn in Cameroon not in Mbé.

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF INFORMANTS

	Name and Surname	Date of Birth	Date and Place of Interview
A	Adamou Luc	1946	25.07.11 Ngaoundéré
B	Anne Karin Kristensen* <sup>133</sup>	23.12.52	30.03.11 Stavanger
C	Bello Nathanaël	1939	31.07.11 Tibati
D	Finn Ove Kaldhol*		04.01.11 Molde
E	Gerd MaitTunheim*	06.09.34	28.03.11 Stavanger
F	Kadia Mathieu	1936	21.07.11 Mbé
G	Sanda Marie	1927	24.07.11 Mbé

---

<sup>133</sup> The name with asterisk indicates Norwegian informants who had sojourned in Mbé others are Cameroonians.



## APPENDIX C

### LIST OF PRIMARY DII PASTORS 1956-1974<sup>134</sup>

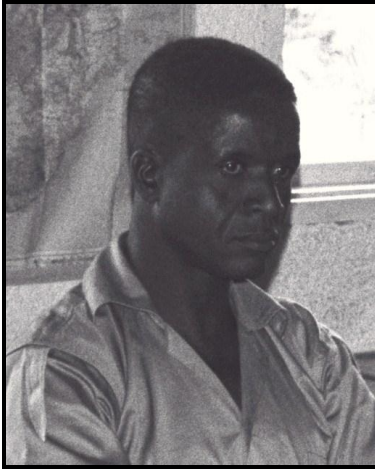
	Name and Surname	Date of Birth	Date of Ordination
1	Abanda Paul	1935	1966
2	Abdou Daniel	1916	1956
3	Bangaoua Pierre	1927	1962
4	Bobo Etienne	1916	1957
5	Dadi Gaston	1930	1967
6	Hamadjida Paul	1922	1961
7	Kadia Mathieu	1935	1966
8	Maïdawa Thomas	1916	1956
9	Maman Joël	1926	1966
10	Mbarbella Paul	1920	1962
11	Meigari Jean	1927	1962
12	Mvoodji Gabriel	1928	1966
13	Saboulou David	1927	1962

---

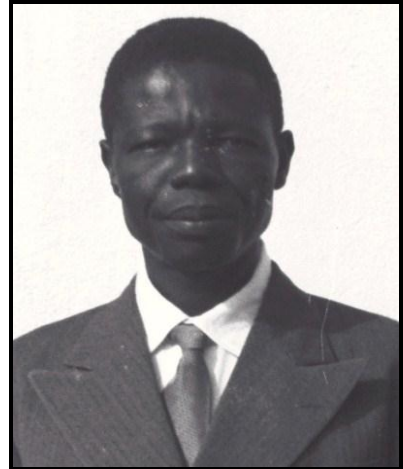
<sup>134</sup> Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 331-333.

## APPENDIX D

### PHOTOS OF FIRST DII CLERICS<sup>135</sup>



Thomas Maïdawa  
1916  
MHS\_A-1255\_11-3015-  
050m



Daniel Abdou  
1916  
MHS\_A-1255\_01-0324-004m



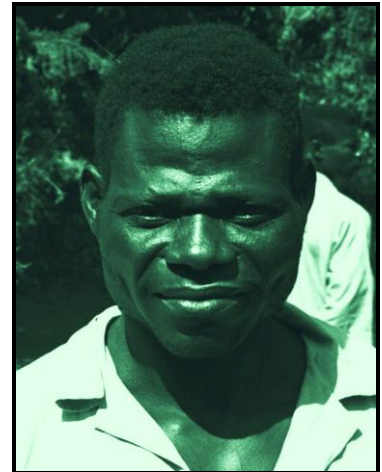
Etienne Bobo  
1916  
MHS\_A-1255\_16-2968-  
026m

---

<sup>135</sup> Photos: School of Mission and Theology, Mission Archives, collections MHS/A-1255 and MHS/A-1045; manipulated images have the suffix “m”. Used by permission.



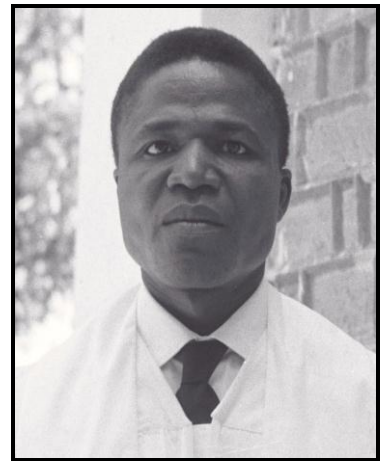
Paul Mbarbella  
1920  
MHS\_A-1255\_04-0752-  
021m



Paul Hamadjida  
1922  
MHS\_A-1255\_10-3014-033m



Joel Maman  
1926  
MHS\_A-1255\_16-2968-  
046m(1)



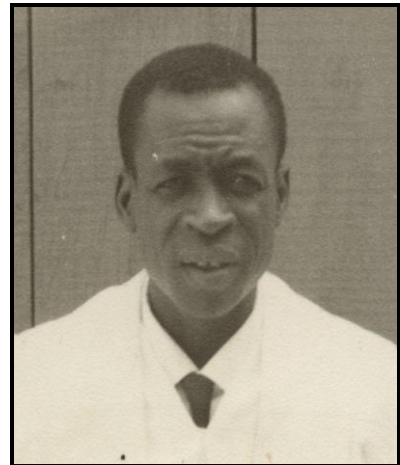
Jean Meigari  
1927  
MHS\_A-1255\_10-3014-082m



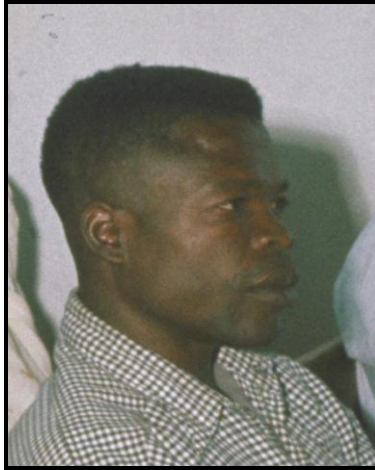
David Saboulou  
1927  
MHS\_A-1255\_13-2621-  
051m



Pierre Bangawa  
1927  
MHS\_A-1255\_08-2618-  
040m



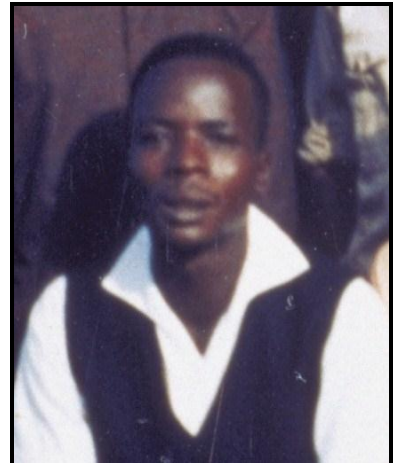
Gabriel Mvodji  
1928  
MHS\_A-1045\_Uc\_000481m



Gaston Dadi  
1930  
MHS\_A-1255\_18-2992-  
077m



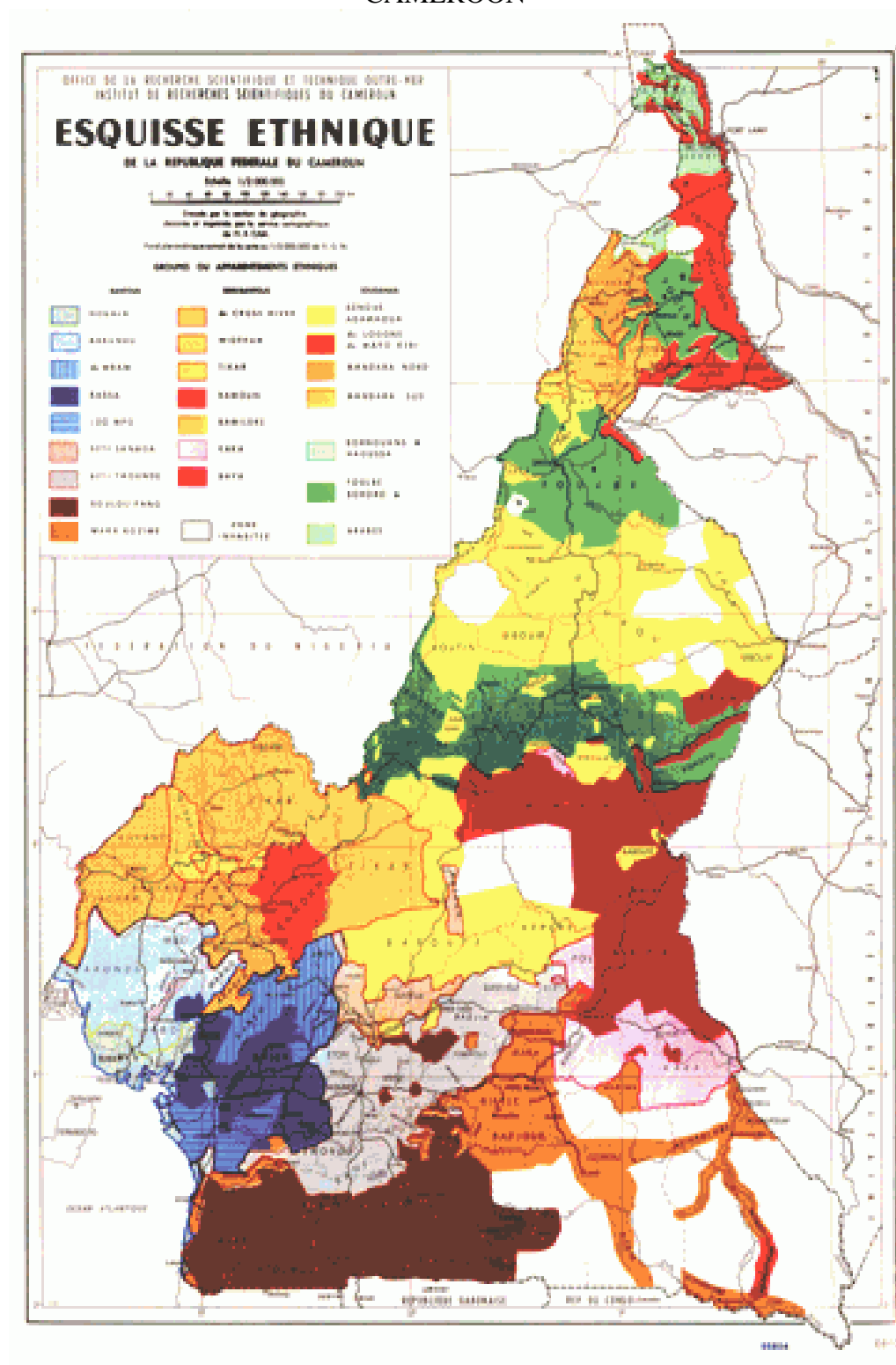
Paul Abanda  
1935  
MHS\_A-1255\_16-2968-  
046m(2)



Matthieu Kadia  
1935  
MHS\_A-1255\_16-2968-  
046m(3)

## APPENDIX E

### ETHNOGRAPHIC MAP OF CAMEROON<sup>136</sup>



<sup>136</sup> [Http:// www.cartographie.ird.fr/spharea](http://www.cartographie.ird.fr/spharea); accessed, 14 May 2012.

## Bibliography

Abwa, Daniel. "The French administrative system in the lamidate of Ngaoundéré, 1915-1945." in *Introduction to the history of Cameroon in Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries*, ed. Martin Z. Njeuma, London: Macmilan Publishers, 1989.

Balia, Daryl and Kirsteen Kim (eds). *Witnessing to Christ Today, Edinburgh 2010, series vol. 2*. Oxford: Regnum Book International, 2010.

Best, F. Thomas. *Instrument of Unity: National Council of Churches within the One Ecumenical Movement*. WCC Publications, 1988.

Bob, Jackson. *Hope for the church: contemporary strategies for growth*. London : Church House Publishing, 2003.

Bonhoff, Lee and Kadia, Mathieu. *Dictionnaire de la langue dii (duru)*. Mbé par Ngaoundéré (Cameroun): Equipe de littérature Dii.

Bosch, J. David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shift in Theology of mission*. New York: Maryknoll, 1991.

Drønen, Tomas Sundnes. *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon: The Dii People and Norwegian Missionaries, 1934-1960*. Boston : Brill, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Communication Conversion et Conversation: Les Dii et les Missionnaires Norvégiens ; Adamaoua 1934- 1960*. Cameroun: Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga, 2008.

Gadji. *The Understanding of the divine among the Dii Tribe, and its Implications for their Christian Faith*. Stavanger: Master Thesis, School of mission and theology, 2007.

Guder, L. Darell (ed). *Missional Church*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing co, 1998.

[Http://www.cartographie.ird.fr/spharea](http://www.cartographie.ird.fr/spharea) Internet; accessed, 14 May 2012.

[Http://www.dacb.org/stories](http://www.dacb.org/stories). Internet; accessed, 26 May 2011.

- Idowu, E. Boladji. *African Traditional Religion: A definition*. London: SCM Press, 1973.
- Jørgensen, Torstein. *I tro og tjeneste: Det Norske Misjonsselskap: 1842 1992, vol.II*. Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolen, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Contact and Conflict: Norwegian Missionaries, the Zulu Kingdom, and the Gospel 1850-1873*. Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1990, 85.
- Kinamon, Michael and Briand E. Cope. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthropology of Key Text and Voices*. Geneva : WCC, 1997.
- Koulagna, Jean. *Unicité et ethnicité dans l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun (EELC) enjeux ecclésiologiques: le cas de la région centre*. Cameroun: Master Thesis, Faculté de Theologie Protestante Yaoundé, 1999.
- Larsen, Erik. *Kamerun: Norsk Misjon Gjennom 50 År*. Stavanger: Nomi Forlag, 1973.
- Lode, Kåre. *Appelés à la Liberté: Histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*. Amstelveen : Improcep éditions, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_ "L'apport culturel de la Mission Norvégienne en Adamaoua" in *Peuples et Cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun)*. Paris : Editions de l'ORSOM, 1993.
- Maïna, Paul. *Les rites d'initiations dans la société Africaine: la politique de circoncision chez les Dii du Nord Cameroun*. Mémoire de psychologie, Université de Yaoundé I, 1988.
- Mcleod, John. *Beginning of Postcolonialism*. Manschester and New York: Manschester University Press, 2010.
- Messina, Jean Paul and Jaap Van Slageren. *Histoire du christianisme au Cameroun: Des origines à nos jours*. Paris: Karthala, 2005.
- Mittelberg, Mark. *Becoming a contagious church: increasing your church's evangelistic temperature*. Michigan, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2007.
- Mohammadou, Eldridge. *Les Royaumes Foulbés du Plateau de l'Adamaoua au XIX Siècle, Vol. IV*. Japan : ILCAA, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Les archives missionnaires du Cameroun de Stavanger (Norvège)*, Ngaoundéré :



Catalogue préliminaire Français-Norvégien, Anthropos, 1996

Muller, Jean-Claude. *Les chefferies dii de l'Adamaoua (Nord-Cameroun)*. Paris : CNRS Editions, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Les rites initiatiques des Diï de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun)*. Nanterre : Société d'Ethnologie, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_ « Merci à vous, les Blancs, de nous avoir libérés ! » : le cas des Dii de l'Adamaoua (Nord-Cameroun) in *Terrain, no.28 (miroirs du colonialisme)*, 1997, 59-72.

Mveng, Engelbert and Beling-Nkoumba. *Histoire du Cameroun*. Yaoundé : CEPMAE, 1974.

Myaziom, Célestin Lomo Aggée. *Sociétés et ritualités religieuses au Cameroun sous domination Française (1916-1958)*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.

Norman, E. Thomas. *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*. American Society of Missiology, Series 20, Maryknoll, New York: orbis Books, 1995.

Oboroji, Anekwe Francis. *Concept of Mission: The Evolution of a Contemporary Missiology*. New York: Maryknoll, 2006.

Sanneh, Lamin and Joel A. Carpenter (Eds). *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*. Oxford: University Press, 2005.

Scherer, S. James and Stephen B. Bevans (eds). « Faith and Culture in Perspective » in *New Direction in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*. New York : Maryknoll, 1999, 1-13.

Siroma, André. *Témoignage sur ma deuxième vocation* (unpublished manuscript). 1986.

Storey, William Keller. *Writing History: A Guide for Students*. Second Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Sundkler, Bengt and Christopher Steed. *The history of Church in Africa*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Taylor, V. John. *The Primal Vision*. Philadelphia: Fortress Pree, 1963.

*The Holy Bible: Today's English version.* New York: American Bible Society, 1991.

Verkuyl, Johannes. *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978.

Wade, T. Coggins. *So that's what missions is all about: Taking the mystery out of missions for individual and group study.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1975.

Wold, Joseph Conrad. *God's Impatience in Liberia.* Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968.